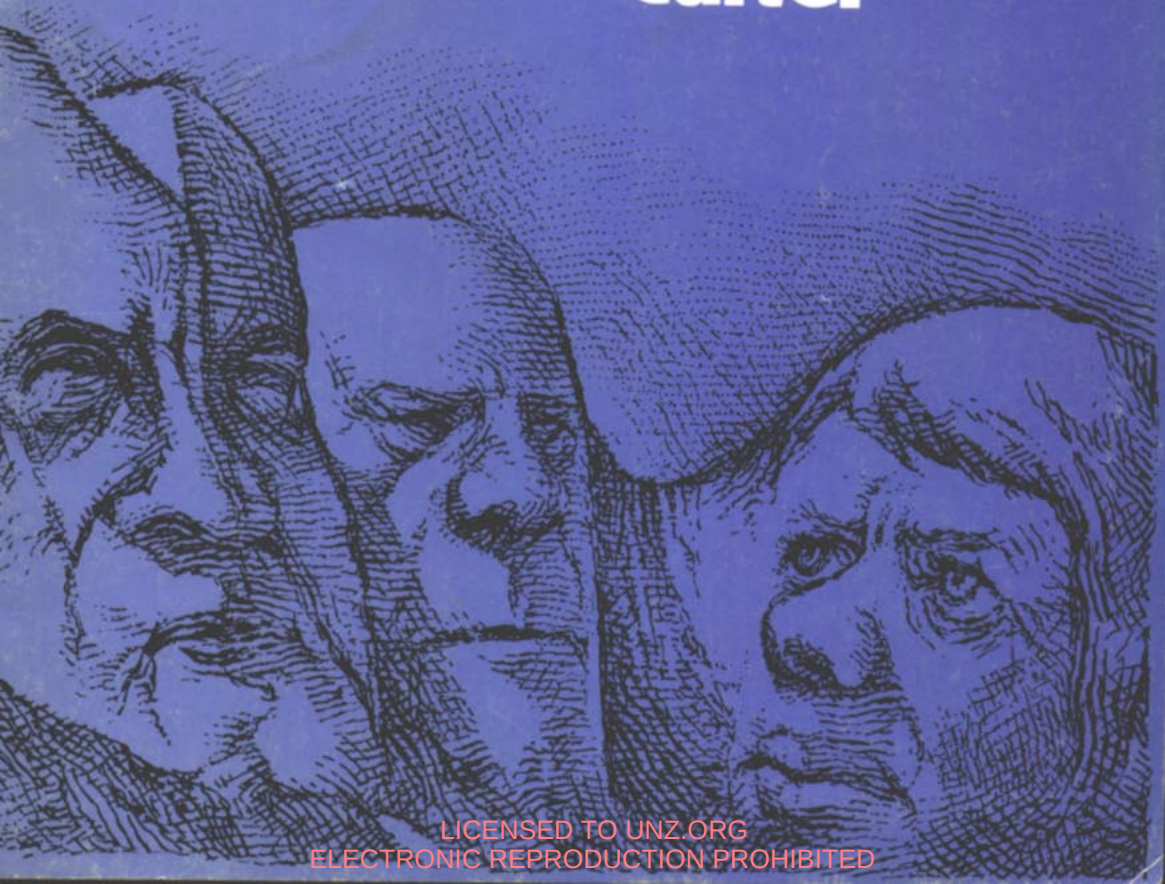
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE CIVIL SERVICE
WHAT'S RIGHT WITH THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

The Washington Monthly

APRIL 1977/$1.50

James David Barber on Nixon, Ford, and Carter



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Letters

This letter—which I have been meaning to write for some time, but have only now gotten around to—is in regard to several specific articles which have appeared in your pages since September '76.

The articles to which I am referring are: "Prisoners of Liberation" by Tom Bethell (September '76); "A Harvard Man Discovers Free Enterprise" by James K. Glassman (October '76); "The Imperial Press" by Tom Bethell and Charles Peters (November '76); and "Concerns About Carter—And His Chief Courtier" by Charles Peters (December '76).

The quality common to all these articles, I believe, is the keen and astute unconventionality with which they fly in the face of conventional "liberal" wisdom.

DAVID B. WILSON
Norfolk, Va.

Jimmy Carter

Your article entitled "Why Jimmy Carter Doesn't Hire Jimmy Carters" in the February issue was particularly apt for me because I remember having a related thought during the campaign. At some point in the past few months—I don't recall whether it was before or after Carter's nomination, but I believe it was before the election—James Reston wrote a column in which he sycophantically intoned about "the eligibles" for posts in the Carter administration. The dateline, I recall, was Cambridge, Mass. He didn't name names. Rather, he wrote that, despite disillusionment about the results wrought by the Schlesingers and the Bundys, a new crop of would-be government leaders was waiting at Harvard and in the large law firms to staff a new Democratic administration.

I read that and thought, "But you've got it all wrong, Reston. Your usual prejudices have blinded you to the fact that Carter's campaign proceeds from the opposite premise. Carter knows that bright lawyers abound in the nether regions and that excellent people, who may or may not have Harvard degrees, staff universities throughout the land."

I thought it and argued it over a few dinner tables, and now we see the result.

RICHARD SCHIRO
Philadelphia, Pa.

Congratulations on your "Why Jimmy Carter Doesn't Hire Jimmy Carters" piece. With Carter abandoning the "outsider" posture of the campaign before the ink dried on reports of his election, opposition to the resurgent "Network" may ultimately generate a populism that cuts across party and ideological lines. More likely, though, little short of a major revolution can displace the infrastructure you profile.

KEVIN P. PHILLIPS
Bethesda, Md.

Kevin Phillips is author of The Emerging Republican Majority.

I do not understand the reason for your constant attacks on President Carter. I think we finally have a good chance for an honest, capable government. The impression I had was that yours would be a magazine of investigative reporting; instead, I get lost in the editorializing of every page, as I look for facts, for substantiation.

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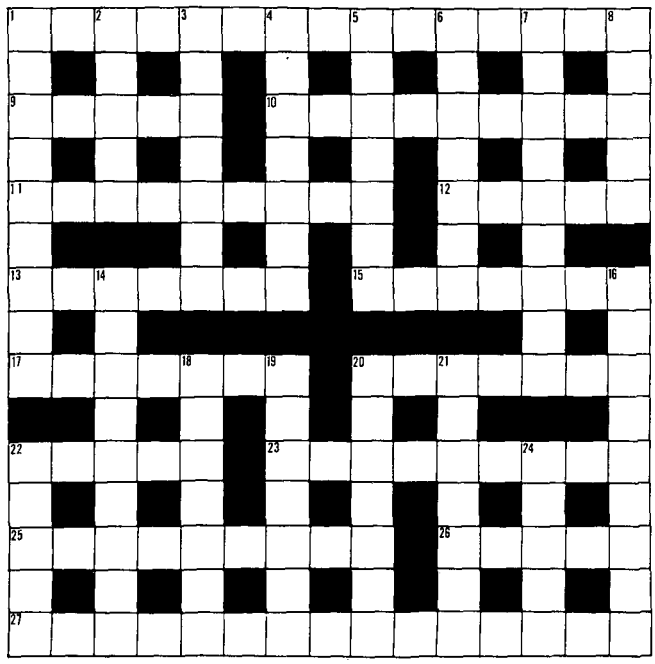
the political puzzle

by John Barclay



ACROSS

1. Barber's view of Carter and Kennedy, for example. (6-9)
9. Let, *i.e.*, selected be selected. (5)
10. An oil (U.S. 1-A) is found in this state. (9)
11. Impervious to Senate sin mess. (9)
12. Here in Paris hesitation is much colder. (5)
13. Takes over U.S.A. mess in transition. (7)
15. Generator broken down, *i.e.*, burnt. (7)
17. Madame in heavenly body produces speech difficulty. (7)
20. Party! is confused instruction to crop-duster. (5,2)
22. The strict end? (5)
23. Is 21 down reorganized in Near East. (4,5)
25. Restaurant meals could become thing to us. (6,3)
26. Complete absence with nothing away and nothing's left. (2,3)
27. Barber's view of Eisenhower. (7-8)

DOWN

1. Maine cars prepared for us. (9)
2. Mistaken voyages? (5)
3. Maine TV prepared for war. (7)
4. Construct as slurp for celestial objects. (7)
5. Arranged place to show her bust. (7)
6. Coming from trees, it makes one less pleasant. (7)
7. Charlotte Amalie talent can come to life. (9)
8. Rita's way to get to the top. (5)
14. Sifts through for South Carolina redresses. (9)
16. Sign to come in to arrange her rent in ease. (5,4)
18. Composer places heavy weight in item upside down. (7)
19. U.S. city in Korea? No change! (7)
20. Water passed lip test. (7)
21. Disperse aroma in East Europe. (7)
22. Morning finds you in puns mounting. (3-2)
24. My cry upsets her. (5)

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g., (2, 3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g., USA, are treated as one word. Answers to last month's puzzle are on page 61.

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An American Redemption: The Presidential Character from Nixon to Ford to Carter

by James David Barber

Nearly eight years ago, we published an article by James David Barber called "Analyzing Presidents." It set forth a theory about the personalities of American Presidents and the impact of those personalities on the conduct of the office. Using biographical information, Barber traced the character development of various twentieth-century Presidents and how it affected each man's way of governing.

The Presidents, in Barber's system, were either active or passive, positive or negative: Taft was passive-positive, Eisenhower passive-negative, Kennedy active-positive, and Johnson active-negative. Richard Nixon was at that point only a few months into his

James David Barber is chairman of the political science department at Duke University. This article is from the new edition of his book, The Presidential Character, *to be published this month by Prentice-Hall.*

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Illustrations by Dave Suter.

presidency, but Barber predicted that he would be an active-negative and that if he "is ever threatened simultaneously with public disdain and loss of power, he may move into a crisis syndrome . . . the stage is set for tragic drama."

In 1972 Barber published his theories in a book, The Presidential Character, *and his predictions about Nixon quickly began to come true. Among the people whose attention Barber's work attracted was the governor of Georgia, who in 1974 had Barber to dinner and who two years later, on the eve of his presidential nomination, said, "I think I have been heavily influenced by James Barber's writings and I think a lot of my ideas come from there."*

Now, in preparation for a revised edition of The Presidential Character *to be published later this month, Barber has written three new chapters, applying his analysis to the post-1972 Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter. What follows is an excerpted version of those three chapters. The material we have selected is all new, published here for the first time.*

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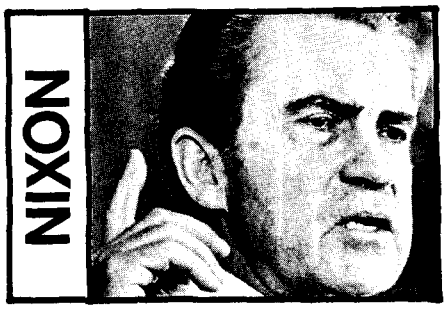

"But he has nothing on!" at last cried all the people.

The Emperor writhed, for he knew it was true. But he thought, "The procession must go on now." So he held himself stiffer than ever, and the chamberlains held up the invisible train.

—Hans Christian Andersen

How quickly the fog of history settles over the brutal terrain of the past. Wars become romantic adventures, depressions provide material for folksy fables, the pestilence is made into an antique amusement. Thus with Watergate. It was just a nightmare, the President after Nixon told us, and it is all over. "The system" took care of it (and surely would again, if need be). Or, we are told we now can see, such a mad President would inevitably have staggered into the Constitution's warning systems. In any case, somehow or other we "got rid of" Richard Nixon, so we should put all that nastiness behind us and move on to make a better future.

Of course that is the Nixonian way of looking at it—another of his victories over the popular mind that he so often startled and dazzled as its attention began to focus too strongly on him. Like a television camera, Nixon moved on from scene to scene quickly, lest understanding set in. He knew, too, how to cooperate with the empiricism of history, by drowning the truth in the facts; today the obsessed Watergate buff can find a lifetime occupation tracing out just where, say, Ulasewicz was when he called Kalmbach on such and such an evening—much as the assassination buffs used to do. The flood of fact-packed books on the subject has strained their authors' capacity to title

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them. What this article can do is not untangle the whole story in all its rich putrescence, but point to the key evidence on critical points. That way we may gain at least a somewhat better capacity to predict—and prevent—another American tyranny.

For that is what Nixon brought off, for a time, and he very nearly succeeded in bringing it off for good. Indeed it is not yet clear how much remains of the political evils he set in motion. At the end of the Nixon regime there was a coup: the presidency was run by a general, Alexander Haig, who, by the luck of the draw, had a passion for reason, if also a certain lack of moral imagination. This general, who more than a year previously had ripped out Nixon's taping systems without permission, in the summer of 1974 entered into negotiation with the Vice President regarding the conditions under which he could come to power—the general again acting on his own. Another military leader, the Secretary of Defense, established a system by which he could veto the Commander-in-Chief's orders to the armed forces. A presidential order conveyed to the Secretary of State elicited the reply, "Tell the President to fuck himself." No tanks in the streets. No bearded madman gesticulating from a balcony. Just some quiet little rearrangements to keep things going—without the interference of the People's Choice.

Fortunately it was one of the Nixon administration's few Horatios, rather than one of its many Iagos, who grabbed the power. A system that has to depend on that kind of fortune is dangerous. The important point here is not that Nixon was a bad man (he was) or that he was legally convictable (we will never know) or even that he was psychiatrically committable (maybe, near the end). It is his *political* aspect that lends immense significance to his tawdry triumph over our Constitution.

Nixon demonstrated the weakness, the vulnerability of the American political system. His discovery and downfall were nearly accidental; at point after point he could have been rescued by other accidents or by easy efforts of his own. His repeated rising up through the processes of nomination and election shows better than any hypothetical supposition could show how the national evaluators—those supposedly knowledgeable citizens the public counts on to recommend presidential candidates—failed miserably, over at least a decade, despite the most abundant evidence ever available regarding any potential President, to predict and guard us from the machinations of an expert flim-flam man.

Similarly with checks and balances. Nixon had no need to march on the Capitol at the head of his White House guard or to throw barbed wire around the Justice Department. He simply set up his own little government on top of the constitutional one and dared the world to say him nay. It took four and a half years for Congress to begin to suppose that his impeachment should be suggested, and that only after they had evidence hard and massive enough to choke Caligula's horse. Through nearly all his presidency, Nixon, to enhance his power, had but to assert his authority, be it the power to bomb or tap, to impound or burgle, to broadcast, blackmail, or bribe.

Strangely, no one seems to have suggested that Watergate (by which I mean the whole wash of woe that flooded forth after that gate was opened in June 1972) gave us a "new Nixon." Through so many even-numbered years in the past, the discovery of new Nixons seemed to have become a national pastime as observers hoped against hope that he was not what he had been. In the event, though, old reliable Nixon came through.

A clear continuity was Nixon's active-negative character. As he had before 1972, he poured on energy, night and day, at home and away; his presidential activities came to take up nearly all his waking hours, and, more

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and more frequently as his end approached, he woke and worked at night. "As long as I am physically able," he pledged in November 1973, "I am going to continue to work 16 to 18 hours a day. . . . " He was a man in motion, restlessly flying off to Camp David, Key Biscayne, or San Clemente, where he often asked his Secret Service guards to "drive somewhere, anywhere." By the end of November 1973, the President had stayed in the White House only four of the 44 weekends of his second term; in his last six weeks in office he spent only six days there.

'Joyless, Brooding'

Reliable Nixon continued also in his stance as a suffering martyr in the presidency. Even the version of the White House tapes he himself released to the public has him in continual complaint: "This damn case!" Even after his enormous victory in the 1972 election, Nixon conveyed a "joyless, brooding quality," one of his Cabinet members remembered, and talked of how all Presidents had gone downhill in their second terms. Even when he sat at ease in Washington while his bombers smashed out the lives of Vietnamese peasants, his sense of proportion and comparison deserted him: the Vietnam bombing became "my terrible personal ordeal."

Extensive data about Nixon's character appeared as the tragedy of his presidency deepened. His intimates had cause to blacken his name, but the detail and convergence of their stories lent them plausibility. Occasional visitors from Congress and the press gave shocking and similar accounts and the President's own voice—on tape heard by members of the House Judiciary Committee and in print read by the world at large—exhibited with unusual clarity the depth and nature of his struggle. Near the end, as his political defenses crumbled, so did his psychological defenses, and Nixon revealed the fragility of his self-esteem, the fear and trembling that hid behind his mask of stoic toughness. At the end, he was drinking heavily, sleeping sporadically, frequently out of touch with the reality gathering around him, often enraged and raging, at times a weeping, staggering, irrational man. Theodore White saw the task of the White House staff, as of August 1974, as "the management of an unstable personality," and others, similarly averse to hyperbolic diagnoses, used similarly strong language.

Nixon's own penchant for hyperbole lasted beyond 1972, as he dramatized his history, seeing his life as a series of sharp discontinuities. From "the largest dinner ever held at the White House" to "the greatest year of progress since World War II," Nixon zigged and zagged through wide varieties of "toughest" decisions, "most difficult crises," and "deepest valleys." He thought it "not too strong a statement to declare that this"—student demonstrations—"is the way civilizations begin to die." "All that we have risked," he said, "hangs in the balance," as he struggled with the Vietnam question. Now he told his friend Rabbi Korff that he could not resign, lest "foreign affairs . . . suffer irreparable harm." As Jonathan Schell put it in his *The Time of Illusion*, Nixon "invented crises and then he made 'great decisions' to resolve them." Clearly the Nixon who saw, as he wanted and needed to see, his life as a fascinating and heroic drama was still there in his time beyond 1972.

He was as insightful as ever about his own character. His speechwriter William Safire, aping Gertrude Stein, saw that "to the real Nixon, the real Nixon is not the real Nixon." "Ego is something we all have," Nixon admitted, "and either you grow out of it or it takes you over. I've grown out of it. It's really a compensation for an inferiority complex. Henry [Kissinger] has that of course. . . ." As he saw himself, "I could always get along with anybody. . . no matter what I thought of them." Just at the time he was refusing to obey subpoenas from

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"Ego is something we all have," Nixon admitted, "and either you grow out of it or it takes you you over. I've grown out of it."

the House Judiciary Committee, President Nixon issued his Law Day 1974 proclamation: "The law retains its value and force because every person knows that no man or woman is above the requirement of the law. Discussing the fate of John Mitchell with John Ehrlichman, Nixon, scoutmaster for the whole troop, says, "But what the hell, I am always kind." As for his stance toward the press, Nixon said, "The critics don't bother me, even though I have had the most unfriendly press in history, it has never bothered me, but it deeply bothers Pat and my daughters. They see it in personal terms whereas I see the press totally in impersonal terms." Again and again, Nixon demonstrated, as Safire put it, "the uncanny ability to step outside of himself and coolly misread the man he observed." As was the case during his years up to 1972, those who looked to Nixon's own statements for guidance to his character would soon be lost.

The Old Style

Nixon's political style, with its overwhelming emphasis on rhetorical manipulation, persisted strongly from 1972 to his resignation in 1974. As with the other active-negative Presidents, over time his dominant style element invaded and exploited the rest of his style—Nixon turned everything, including his intense homework and conspiratorial conversations, to the task of impression management. That is not surprising given his pre-1972 style, which he practiced over a lifetime in politics. What is interesting is the way Nixon's powerful rhetorical style worked, and may work again, to distort and undercut the great democratic conversation that is politics.

Nixon's rather rancid view of the world bore up well after 1972. He changed his mind on a few specifics—but specific issues, in their substance, had never meant much to him any-

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how. He told some Republican congressmen concerned about budget deficits: "It will take you a little while to get used to fighting *for* what you've been fighting *against* all your lives." If there is one thing no one can find in the Nixon presidency, despite volume after volume, it is a serious policy direction, a program or order of priorities from the White House. To the central person in the White House, such matters were derivative, secondary to the purpose of tending to whatever came through the door of the store. As before 1972, Nixon's world view came to focus on process, not substance. That lasted till the end.

Nixon's view of human nature continued to be jaundiced. "Most people are good not because of love," he said, "but because of fear. You won't hear that in Sunday School, but it's true." Category after category of Americans earned his disdain. "The upper intellectual types, the soft heads" were valued less than "average people" who "won't think it is much of a crisis unless it affects them"—hardly a ringing endorsement of the average person. Education made people "brighter in the head but weaker in the spine." The "new managers" in business were pusillanimous—they "paint their tails white and run with the antelopes," Nixon thought. People were always letting you down. "These jackasses got off," Nixon told Henry Petersen. "See this Liddy is crazy and Hunt and the whole bunch conducted this [inaudible] Mitchell wasn't minding the store and Magruder ia a weak fellow—and the damn thing—and then afterwards they compounded it by what happened afterwards." "Everybody wants to make a name for themselves in this [unintelligible]. They'll drag it on and on and on." "Everybody's for himself."

Dereliction was never surprising to Nixon; that's the way people are, in his mind. Virtue was the surprise; "Why did Petersen play the game so straight with us?" Nixon had to ask, as if no one had ever done that before. His old "friend" John Mitchell, along with numerous others who had staked their careers on his success, became "hors d'oeuvres" wherewith to sate the appetite of the prosecutors—"Give 'em an hors d' oeuvre and maybe they won't come back for the main course," our President told the remnant of his palace guard.

Nixon's fatalism is not nearly so evident in the Watergate period. Far more so is the part of his world view that saw chaos rampant at the same time conspiracy was closing in. To be sure, he spoke more often of history —"The United States is once again acting with assurance and purpose on the world stage. We know where we are going. We are moving with history and moving history." But in the daily life of the White House, it seemed the course of history could take most any turn. "In this matter, nothing is beyond the realm of possibility," he said, and added later, "It is breaking so fast. Everything is likely to blow around here." Appointing a special prosecutor would "just put another loose cannon right there rolling around the deck." The release of the Nixon tapes—edited by the President to show himself in the best possible light—conveyed to the great American public just how much like a deck full of loose cannons the Nixon White House was. At the last of it, the tingling fear of betrayal in the moral darkness of that place came to preoccupy its inhabitants. And as the uniformity of the Communist menace faded in his mind (it had begun to fade a good while ago) the *form* of Nixon's mindset found another enemy in the tight and evil cabal he saw implacably stalking him: the media.

The Power Disease

Jonathan Schell finds "the fear of impotence" a recurrent theme in Nixon's public statements, as when Nixon worried about moves to "tie the hands of the President," or "cut off the President's legs," or that America might become "a pitiful helpless giant." One need not go that far;

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the ambiguities of "impotence" could detract from the important political truth that Nixon was a President in perpetual anxiety about holding and advancing his power. In the end, he lost not only power but authority, not only sanction but office, and along the way his aides learned to discount his more ridiculous orders, such as not to serve soup because some spilled one day or "No more landing at airports!" after a foul-up. Nixon's power sense (which he saw equalled only by John Connally's and Nelson Rockefeller's) fluctuated in a way expressed precisely when he said to his press secretary: "That's an order, Ron—no discussion. Unless, of course, you disagree." He found the bureaucracy particularly infuriating, and HEW the most maddening of all: "What is it about those guys, anyway? One day they're blocking something deliberately, the next they're forgetting to do something I made a commitment to do."

Given that festering anger, no wonder he turned to a man of the type Charles Colson used to be, a hit man ready to obey when the President told him to "break all the china in the White House if you have to" to do his bidding. "Colson—he'll do anything. He'll walk right through doors," Nixon bragged. What balm it must have been to his bruised power sense to hear his CIA director say, "There is only one President at a time. I work only for you," or to learn that his White House general-in-residence informed a Deputy Attorney General of the United States: "Your commander-in-chief has given you an order. You have no alternative." At least once, Nixon in a fury undertook to rein in Kissinger. Colson reports the President's reaction to an apparent Kissinger press leak:

"He exploded, ordering me to call Kissinger at once. (It was then 6:30 a.m. in California.) 'I will not tolerate insubordination,' he barked into the telephone. 'You tell Henry he's to talk to no one, period! I mean no one.

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And tell him not to call me, I will accept no calls from him.' With that he slammed the receiver in my ear."

Of course Nixon did tolerate insubordination—or at least he experienced plenty of it at the end, when he could not find much subordination anywhere. But he was forever railing against it at the same time he was struggling to control his own aggressive impulses. Like Lyndon Johnson, Nixon could demonstrate his power in the pettiest ways, such as demanding, on a sudden whim, to be taken to a concert at the Kennedy Center, despite all the inconvenience and disruption that it caused. In a thinly disguised account of a diatribe by President "Monckton," John Ehrlichman portrays his boss' power feelings:

"... this government is shot through with miserable little people who do not love this country. Ideologues.

"They would pull down our institutions if they could; they have no real concern for the well-being of America.

"The only thing that motivates them is their desire for the realization of their left-wing goals, in education or health or welfare or whatever their field is. And they hate me, because they know I will try to stop them. . . . Oh, I don't mind their hate. I understand it. I am the first President in this century who really threatens them, and they know it. They fear me and so they hate me. And they should fear me; I intend to root them out. I don't care that they are disloyal to me personally. . . . But the Federal bureaucracy must not be disloyal to the Presidency—or the country. I have concluded that their disloyalty has reached such a magnitude that it seriously threatens our constitutional system, and even the nation. The goddamn traitors. . . . "

And so on. Yet this character is a fictionalized version of the same President who had to ask his aides for permission to enter their conversations—"Can I spend a minute?"—sometimes repeatedly in the same conversational sequence, as his own version of his tapes reveals. But it is obvious that what this President wanted to believe about himself was that he was powerful indeed, a "sovereign" who had his "subordinates" "on a short leash."

'The Easy Thing'

Like his active-negative predecessors, Nixon moralized his preferred line in such a way as to define alternatives as temptations, and thus his resisting them as virtuous. His "but-that-would-be-the-easy-way" habit continued: "The easiest course would be for me to blame those to whom I delegated the responsibility to run the campaign. But that would be a cowardly thing to do," he said in a television address, and then when the cameras were off, he told the crew: "It wasn't easy." As the end approached, Nixon said he would not resign because, "From a personal standpoint, resignation is an easy cop-out." To Senator Buckley's suggestion that he resign, Nixon replied sarcastically that, "While it might take an act of courage to run away from a job that you were elected to do, it also takes courage to stand and fight for what you believe is right, and that's what I intend to do." He told the Cabinet that he could not resign because that would change the Constitution, and so "I will go through this with my head high—right up to the end, if it comes."

The temptation was always toward weakness, relaxation, collapse: "All these people have come in here crying. I ought to be the one crying. I don't want anyone crying." He wanted others to know that "I sometimes feel like I'd like to resign. Let Agnew be President for a while. He'd love it." (To which Henry Petersen gave the desired response: "I don't even know why you want the job.") And earlier, when discussing the cover-up with Ehrlichman, Nixon equated "being forthcoming" with "caving [in]."

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The point is clear: although Nixon eventually does all the things he is "tempted" to do in these passages, he does them long after they would have done him any good. Along the way, the temptations—to cry or quit or talk—must be resisted with all his moral force and fervor.

The other side of the temptation coin is the exhausted face of the gladiator straining upward, lost in his quest, experiencing the sufferer's confirmation that he cannot be doing *this* from any selfish motive. We have seen the suffering and striving Nixon already: working to all hours, exhausted, constantly complaining and reaching for sympathy, all the while denying that he needs any of that. The tapes are full of presidential metaphors of masochism: having to "bite the Dean bullet today," to "prick the boil and take the heat," "to get beat on the head and shoulders," "to be nibbled to death by a thousand hurts," not to mention numerous variants of Nixon's "scab-flicking" simile. But far from passive acquiescence, Nixon would do unto others as he expected they would try to do unto him, by sharp, disciplined struggle, however "painful." As the "crisis" deepened in the fall of 1973, Julie Nixon wrote on her calendar, "Fight. Fight. Fight."

The Lone Struggle

As far back as January 1971, Nixon realized isolation was a part of his public image and proclaimed "Open Door Hours." Statistics were to be gathered on how many people saw the President, and aides were to "build on the theme that he's the most 'Open Door' President in history." It did not work and could not last, because Nixon simply was not an Open Door person. As Watergate deepened, this famous loner of a President got loner and loner. His contacts with the press had already been in steep decline and became even rarer. Not only did his Cabinet members have trouble seeing him, his own lawyers were sometimes cut out—James St. Clair confessing he had not heard the crucial tapes, Leonard Garment complaining, at the end, "We had no access to our client." Nixon spent hours alone in the Lincoln room, which is furnished for one, the air-conditioning on high, the fire ablaze at the hearth, pondering his fate to the strains of "Victory at Sea." Cynics said that when he wanted to be alone, he brought along Bebe Rebozo, and they would sit together, talkless, for long stretches. Your average politician would rather talk than eat, argue than sleep, continue to converse than go the bathroom—and with the more the merrier. Nixon by Christmas

"bite the Dean bullet today"

1973 "didn't want to see anyone and no one really wanted to see the President."

The President's physical separation from others, dangerous as that was, was only part of the picture. When he *was* with others, he kept them away, psychologically, by dominating the conversation or by just not listening. He jabbered on to Gerald Ford, driving him "close to distraction," according to John Osborne. As part of "Operation Candor," in November 1973, Nixon went into a social blitz with Congress: in eight meetings in six days, he met with nearly all of the 234 House and Senate Republicans

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and with 46 Democrats. Senator Barry Goldwater saw what those meetings amounted to:

"I've never known a man to be so much a loner in any field. . . . The President, I think, thinks of himself as the supreme politician in this country. And being a loner, I think he sits by himself and tells himself what he's going to do. Now we went through this gesture period of having congressmen and senators down to see him—but it seems to have ended. . . . And as a result he's not getting advice. That's his problem, he's not getting it. And when he gets it, he won't listen to it. . . . My God, we've never had so many serious problems in the history of this nation."

That propinquity may not impel communication was evident in one of these "gesture period" meetings, when Republican Senator Robert Packwood looked his President in the eye and gave him a civics lesson:

"All of us, Mr. President, whether we're in politics or not, have weaknesses. For some, it's drinking. For others it's gambling. For still others, it's women. None of these weaknesses applies to you. Your weakness is credibility. This has always been your short suit with the news media and the general public. The problem with the public is that they no longer believe you. They no longer trust the integrity of the administration. . . .

"Congress has come to expect that many people who testify before it lie. It's an entirely different matter, however, when one person gives his word to another. That is a bond which those of us in politics revere highly. Those who breach that bond suffer an incalculable loss of credibility. . . .

"For too long, this administration has given the public the impression that its standard of conduct was not that it must be above suspicion but that it must merely be above criminal guilt. Mr. President, that is not an adequate standard of conduct for those who have been accorded the privilege of governing this country."

Nixon's reply was to say, "Thank you," and move on to the next man. You can lead a President to conversation, but you can't make him listen. Nixon was in an important sense "alone" even in the midst of company; this was especially so after Watergate gripped him.

The fact of Nixon's isolation is evident; what it meant to him is summed up in his comment to his then-friend John Dean, on March 13, 1974: "Bullshit: Nobody is a friend of ours." By April of that year, J. Anthony Lukas reports, "nobody trusted anybody in the Nixon camp. Haldeman, Ehrlichman, and Dean were routinely taping their conversations with each other and any other potential witness." At the end of April, Nixon at last fired these brittle and prideful counselors and took on a new crew. But the new aides, as Theodore White saw, "were loyal only to the public policies of Richard Nixon, his proclaimed purposes, the record that had won for him the largest popular election margin in American history. He could trust such men to serve such public purposes, but not to protect him personally. He was alone—all alone against. . .'the system.' "

So his rescue would be totally dependent on himself. Much as he felt that political leaders in the Middle East could rely "only on my words" and that agreements with the Soviet Union "were possible because of a personal relationship that was established between the General Secretary and the President of the United States," Nixon came to see Watergate as no one's but his:

"No man in public life," Nixon said in a speech, "has ever had a more loyal group of friends." In private, Nixon brooded over a biography of Napoleon, perhaps imagining his own Elba.

The Appeal to Faith

I will spare readers an extensive account of Nixon's litany of self-justifying idealisms called forth for

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protection from the prying eyes of reporters, courts, and special prosecutors. On the one hand, Watergate was one of those "petty, little, indecent things that seem to obsess us," one of "the murky, small, unimportant, vicious little things" contrasting so sharply with the high task of "building a better world." On the other hand, throughout his exhortations, Watergate threatened the presidency itself, the fundamental constitutional order, and the very peace of the world. Nothing is more familiar to those who lived attentively through those days than Nixon's extraordinary capacity to link his pettiest acts with his proudest purposes. The public could not be allowed to hear him plotting to fool them because "the President of the United States, under our Constitution, has a responsibility to this office to maintain the separation of power and also maintain the ability of not only this President but future Presidents to conduct the office in the interests of the people." The active-negative's enormous capacity for moralistic self-justification shone brightly through the Watergate miasmas.

The Emergent Enemy

"As you know, we're up against ruthless people," Nixon reminded Alexander Haig as the crisis persisted. Nixon was used to that. His aide Safire thought he was the first political paranoid with a majority. He lived in a generally dangerous world, as he saw and felt it, and he always had. He could sense the lurking ambushers: "I guess the Kennedy crowd is just laying in the bushes waiting to make their move," he told John Dean. Ruthless people laying for you in the bushes– that was Nixon's vision of the political landscape.

In an interesting passage, Nixon in February 1973 told his Cabinet what he had learned from another sovereign:

"I was talking to King Hussein of Jordan. When he was 16 years old, an assassin shot his grandfather, and he ran after the assassin and got shot himself. He made the point–if people throw rocks at you in a parade, you cannot sit down and look for protection. *The moment a leader shows timidity he encourages people to go after him.*

"People can sense when a leader is timid and they automatically attack. Remember, you are a member of the President's Cabinet. Try to be conciliatory when others are conciliatory toward you, but when the other side doesn't want to heal wounds, fight 'em–you get more respect."

In a world of piranhas, one had better be a shark.

As the Watergate crisis failed to fade back into the wake of the Nixon progress, Nixon's enemies, so perceived, multiplied. There were the "Harvards" (of Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox's 37 staff lawyers, 36 were Ivy League graduates), the

In private, Nixon brooded over a biography of Napoleon, perhaps imagining his own Elba.

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Kennedys (Nixon on tape: "I was reading a book last night. A fascinating book, although fun book... on Kennedy's Thirteen Mistakes, the great mistakes"), the "upper intellectual types," the "establishment" ("dying"), Jews (Nixon's oft-repeated comment: "The Jewish cabal is out to get me"), and Italians ("They're not like us.... They smell different, they look different, act different.... trouble is, you can't find one who is honest"). The famous "enemies lists" ran the gamut from James Reston to Robert Sherrill, and included such dangerous folk as Carol Channing, Steve McQueen, Gregory Peck, Bill Cosby, Joe Namath, Tony Randall, Barbara Streisand, Jane Fonda, Paul Newman, and Dick Gregory. Former friends (Dean, Magruder, Mitchell) and worshippers (Hunt, Liddy, Barker, et al.) became objects of disdain and derision, to be "stroked" or "nailed."

Elliot Richardson tried to get across to Nixon's aides that "if you're President, there isn't any 'they'; the President has to be first among 'us'." The lesson simply would not take. Nixon at the end was lashing out in nearly every direction at "the people who won't rest until they get me."

The other three active-negative Presidents I studied, Wilson, Hoover, and Johnson, eventually fastened their ire on a single, personal enemy. I believe Nixon would have done the same and that the person might well have been Senator Edward Kennedy, particularly if the Watergate investigation had developed in Kennedy's committee. But the truth is that Nixon, despite many castigations of Kennedy and the Kennedys (not to mention such Kennedyists as Archibald Cox), targeted his anger not primarily on a person but on the media. There were individual targets there, too, such as Daniel Schorr ("that son of a bitch") and Joseph Alsop (who described Nixon as "the armpit of humanity"), and individual collectivities like *The Washington Post* (scheduled by Nixon for "damnable, damnable problems" after the election). But it was the press in general—the sum of the specifics—that got to him. Nixon was practicing his reverse-of-the-facts rhetoric when he said, "The critics don't bother me .... I see the press totally in impersonal terms." On the contrary, Safire, who had heard Nixon fulminate that "the press is the enemy" a dozen times, explained:

"In all the world of 'us against them,' the press was the quintessential 'them,' the font and succor of other 'thems.' In terms of power, the academic 'them' was insignificant; the social-cultural elitist 'them' was useful as a foil that would help attract workingmen to a Nixon coalition; the liberal, political 'them' was in the process of destroying itself by narrowing its base along severe ideological-faddist lines; but the journalistic 'them' was formidable and infuriating, a force to be feared in its own right, but even more important, a magnifying glass and public address system that gave strength and attention to all the other 'thems.' "

Specifically on Watergate, Nixon said he had "never heard or seen such outrageous, vicious, distorted reporting in my 27 years of public life."

Surely in the long view of historical hindsight, Nixon's press will be seen as charitable in the extreme. Whether because he learned to play the press like a violin, counting on its short attention span and shallow insight, or because the press was in the main, with a few national exceptions, attuned to his Republican rhetoric, Nixon came through, time and time again in his career, forgiven before he was explained. But from his point of view, the press was the essential hostile threat: "they" could present his drama "in a way" different from his way, could warp his intentions away from the ideal, could pervert his most well-meant initiatives, and, most important, could refuse that enthusiastic consent which, if granted, would make his way work. ■

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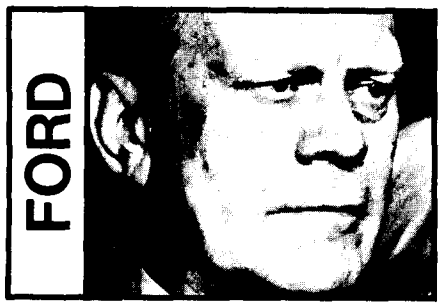

Gerald R. Ford came on too fast for confident prediction. A reluctant Nixon took him, in October 1973, as his Vice President, to replace the disgraced, resigned, and indicted Spiro Agnew, who, it was said, had preferred to receive his payoffs in cash in brown paper bags. In stark contrast, Ford was just what Diogenes had been looking for—Mr. Clean himself—as became clear when hundreds of FBI agents fanned out across the country on a failing mission: to search out Ford peccadilloes. There was no real trouble about his nomination: it seemed everybody loved him. The American Political Science Association had named him a "Congressman's Congressman." "I feel that I am among friends," he said as the hearings began, and when he came to the House chamber to take the oath he promised, with refreshingly credible sincerity, to "do the very best I can for America." The stock market went up 26 points.

It was nice to have a non-crook Vice President, but few thought Ford would rise above that post. He did not think so and said he did not intend to be a presidential candidate in 1976, as Coolidge had said of 1928. He was against knocking down Nixon—"After a play is called, you shouldn't tackle your own quarterback"—and having laid his hand on the Bible in front of all his old congressional friends, he turned to the President and said, "You have my support and loyalty." But whatever Ford's intentions, most thought, along with David Broder, probably the country's best-informed political reporter, that Ford as a potential presidential candidate for 1976 could "probably be safely ignored."

There were congressmen with their doubts about Ford, but as one of them put it, Ford voted "wrong most of the time, but he's decently wrong." Given the national climate of expectations, his decency was an enormous advantage—and a distraction from hard questions about his beliefs and skills. Because he was only Vice President, it did not seem to matter much.

One night in the 1940s when Ford was serving on an aircraft carrier, a terrific typhoon came up. Three destroyers sank with most of their crews. Ford's carrier caught fire. He was in bed below when the alarm sounded, dashed up to the reeling flight deck, slipped and "slid across the deck like a toboggan," he remembered. "I put my feet out and fortunately my heels hit the little rim that surrounds the flight deck—I was heading straight for the ocean. I spun over on my stomach and luckily dropped over the edge onto the catwalk just below. We lost five seamen

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or officers during that storm—sliding over the side and into the sea—so I guess I was one of the lucky ones."

So one type of experience Jerry Ford shared with such Presidents as Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, John Kennedy, and a President-to-be, Jimmy Carter, was a handshake with death, up close. Like them, Ford came away with a strong reinforcement of something that was there before—the sense that "I was one of the lucky ones." And like a whole generation of young men who, in their innocence, had gone off to fight, he came home with questions about matters larger than his own fate. "A change happened within me during the war," he said. "In college I had been a real isolationist. But the war and being overseas changed my mind about the role that America should play in the world."

Politics had played no important part in his life, but he had done some dabbling in it before the war, and his father had broken the ice: during the war Dad headed his county's Office of Civil Defense (uncomplainingly, despite hard pain from stomach ulcers), and when Jerry came home, Dad was already into his second year as County Republican Chairman. Jerry himself was caught up in the campus excitement of the spring of 1940, as Hitler's Wehrmacht lashed across Europe, threatening Britain itself. Like other safely positioned golden youths, Jerry felt the urge to "do something." The best prospect immediately available, from Ford's viewpoint, was Wendell Willkie, a big, shaggy, outspoken businessman who had mastered the art of seeming not a politician and who set out to challenge the great Franklin D., then violating tradition in a shocking appeal for a third term. Jerry went down to New York from Yale weekends to work for Willkie (whose motto was "*Win* with Willkie"). That summer Jerry worked full time in the Willkie campaign in Grand Rapids. Dad was skeptical: his son might get dirtied up in politics, and besides, the family could use some Jerry-generated summer income. But when Dad saw Jerry was determined, he advised him how to do it.

Dad said to go see Frank McKay, big-time Republican boss, a man who seemed to collect at least one cherry from every pie baked in political Michigan. McKay kept Jerry waiting four hours, then dismissed him with hello-goodby.

Willkie lost the election, but carried Michigan. Another day, in 1941, Jerry happened into a conversation with McKay's arch-enemy, a determined dentist who called his organization "The Home Front" after the English farmers preparing to wield their pitchforks against Nazi paratroopers. McKay's slippery shenanigans were beginning to become visible. Would Jerry join the revolution of purity? "Oh boy," he said, "you can count me in on that." But then he was off coaching sailors.

The dentist wrote him in the Navy, and Jerry wrote Dad, "If the Home Front ever asks you to do something, don't turn them down. I'm going to get into this thing when I get back from service and I'll take your place. So don't turn them down." Dad listened, and against his better judgment agreed to go on the County Committee.

Jerry came home, joined a well-known law firm, and played golf. He was single, 33, and apolitical. But he was a veteran, and he soon found himself in league with other ex-GI's, who, trying to build little houses, ran up against the tightly united, McKay-linked banking, zoning, and real estate interests of Grand Rapids. Jerry organized an association. It bucked the interests and won—not everything, but some land and some key changes in the law. For the first time, Jerry had stepped into politics and scored. But he was not yet carrying his own ball.

That came in 1948. Michigan's Senator Arthur Vandenberg, who had made one of those rare sea-changes of mature political opinion—from isolationism to fervent, practical inter-

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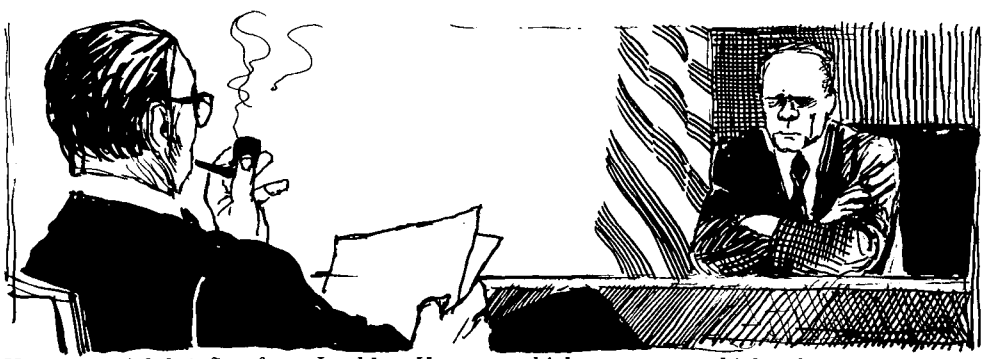
nationalism—was being bedeviled by the congressman from Jerry's district, a man nearly twice Jerry's age named Bartel Jonkman. Like Richard Nixon, Jonkman had quickly picked up the social vibrations that were to explode into McCarthyism, the sense that, in our fervor to whip the Fascists of the right, America had let nefarious leftists sneak in the back door. To Jonkman, the Vandenberg-backed Marshall Plan for reconstructing postwar Europe was anathema, and he said so at every opportunity. Thus Vandenberg was looking for someone to unseat this bothersome critic. He found young, handsome veteran Jerry Ford. Later, Ford remembered, "I thought about it and thought about it and finally I decided that although I probably couldn't win, he ought to be challenged. I told them I would go." He figured the odds at three to one against him. Vandenberg himself felt he had to stand above the fray, could make no public move for Ford. Jerry seemed so much the sacrificial lamb that Jonkman disdained to campaign against him at first, and later, as the election approached, he was trapped in Washington anyway, when Harry Truman called a special session to embarrass the "do-nothing 80th Congress."

So it was not the hope of victory but the spur of conscience that pressed Ford to compete. His senior law partner gave him time off with pay, and Ford hit the trail like a whirling dervish. "I worked like hell," he said later. "I really covered those counties."

He got a quick briefing from Jerald terHorst (a local reporter who would become President Ford's press secretary) on which cows were which colors; he visited seven farms before eight a.m., one day, in the pouring rain. He waited patiently while each farmer got his words together, made notes of their complaints, and, shaking hands goodby, said, "Remember the name—Ford. If I get to Congress I'll remember what you've told me." At one farm, Jerry got carried away: he promised a dairyman that if he won he would work for two weeks in the man's barn—a seemingly safe bet, given his chances. After the election, "There I was, every morning, from 4:30 until about 9:30, helping with the cows, cleaning up the barn, you name it. . . ."

Everywhere he went Ford challenged Jonkman to debate. Jerry's issue was Vandenberg's: "I believe in aid to Europe, with emphasis on making certain the common man in the countries we aid gets the maximum benefits. That is the way to build democracy." He was no great shakes as a public speaker; sophisticates thought him ill-informed. But he candidly confessed his ignorance when necessary, and said, "But I'll find out for you." His ideas may have seemed consequential to him, but not much so to the voters (to whom the price of milk meant more than a European renaissance) or to the band of Home Front Republicans on his team, who were bent on knocking off



He got a quick briefing from Jerald terHorst on which cows were which colors.

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the McKay-Jonkman axis. It was personal contact politics, flat out, every day and night, the "technique" by which many a supposedly secure incumbent has been toppled.

Jerry Ford swept the district—23,632 to Jonkman's 14,341. The campaign had cost $7,200. Shortly thereafter, Elizabeth Bloomer Warren became Mrs. Gerald R. Ford.

The Fords went off to Washington and he took his place in the last row on the House Republican side. He was lucky to find a first-rate aide, John Milanowski, a former speech teacher and link to the Grand Rapids Polish community, a connection infuriating to certain local elements who warned Ford to get rid of "that Polack pope-lover." Ford put his arm around his friend's shoulder and said, "John, don't worry. We'll kill 'em with love." John spent hours coaching Ford in oratory, with no great success—he progressed to believable but fell short of inspiring.

Ford's leader was Arthur Vandenberg: "I really admired him. He was my mentor." Vandenberg passed on a wisdom that was well-suited to the needs of the senior congressional sages—concentrate on committee work, cultivate the constituency, let the bigwigs make speeches on the floor. Ford picked up the challenge and ran with it. He became a committee man par excellence, particularly in mastering the tangled details of defense budgets. He and Milanowski established what terHorst calls "one of the smoothest 'district-serving' systems on Capitol Hill." Every last letter was answered. He spoke rarely and kept to the point. The barons, unsurprisingly, came to like him, and Ford, ever the loyalist, built into his style their delicate ways, into his thought their assumptions. He began to think he would like to be Speaker some day. He felt he could count on a lot of chums—like young Rep. John Kennedy in the office next door, young Rep. Richard Nixon upstairs. He spent more than a quarter-century in the House of Representatives. Not until that game was over, and Jerry Ford was suddenly thrust onto a much wider field, would anyone—himself included—see the Presidency as his goal.

'Truth Is the Glue'

To those who see no presidential virtue in anything less than large leaps forward, Ford was a presidential failure. He was—is, has always been—a step-by-step thinker of the Republican persuasion (and the only Republican among the active-positives, at least since TR), so it is hardly surprising that he did not trumpet grand themes. He was not intellectual enough, not literary enough for our increasingly wordy political culture. Nor did he understand why that culture can only afford to romanticize the Harry Trumans of this world in retrospect. But he knocked into a cocked hat, for once and all, the idea that the presidency *had* to turn a man into a majesty.

In the end, Ford's weighty legacy was as simple as this: he revived his country's hope for faith in government. Back when he took over, Jerry Ford he put it this way:

"I believe that truth is the glue that holds government together, not only our government but civilization itself. That bond, though strained, is unbroken at home and abroad. In all my public and private acts as your President, I expect to follow my instincts of openness and candor with full confidence that honesty is always the best policy in the end. My fellow Americans, our long national nightmare is over. Our Constitution works; our great Republic is a government of laws and not of men. . . . I now solemnly reaffirm my promise I made to you last December 6: to uphold the Constitution, to do what is right as God gives me to see the right, and to do the very best I can for America. God helping me, I will not let you down."

In that sense, the most important sense, he did not let us down. ■

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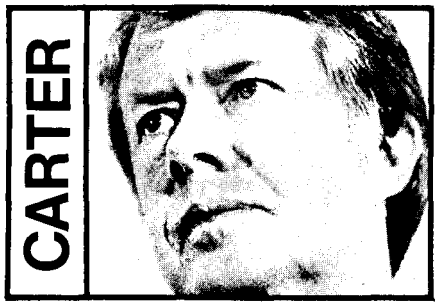

Jimmy Carter was barely a blip on the national political horizon when, in September 1974, *U.S. News and World Report* surveyed the 1976 Presidential scene. The man for President Ford to beat, they thought, was some part of Kennedy-Wallace-Jackson-Muskie-Mondale-Bentsen-McGovern-Stevenson-Bayh-Church-Udall-Bumpers-Wendell Ford-Askew-Byrne-Gilligan. After studying through the winter, by April the editors were hypothesizing that Senator Edward Kennedy would be the choice of a deadlocked Democratic convention, because "with a host of contenders and more presidential primaries than ever before, it now seems certain that none will emerge with enough delegates to win a first-ballot nomination, or even an early-ballot victory." By then, Carter had been stepping along the road to the convention for 33 months, having been set in motion by a psychiatrist, Peter Bourne, who had assayed the Carter personality and politics at close range when he worked for the Governor in Georgia. The next year would show victory, and 1977 a new President called "Jimmy," not only by his intimates, but by every Tom, Dick, and Harry in the land, to whom the name "Carter" had meant ink and liver pills but an historical moment ago.

Jimmy Carter was launched from Wise Sanitorium on October 1, 1924, as President Calvin Coolidge was trying to rouse himself to stave off the challenge of John W. Davis. His family lived in Archery, a place left out of laws and maps, incorporated only in the minds of its inhabitants, known, if at all, as "near Plains."

Many a time he would hike or ride into Plains, to visit and then come home again. Plains was different: "During my childhood," he wrote, "I never considered myself a part of the Plains society"—neither did Miss Lillian—"but always thought of myself as a visitor when I entered that 'metropolitan' community." Later Atlanta and Washington would replace Plains as places for an outsider to break into and prove himself. Plains was where they had medicine shows

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and the traveling circus, log-cutting contests put on by the ax salesmen, Halloween carnivals, and marble games. It was the metropolis where, as a high school student, Jimmy's mind took an expanding leap.

Jimmy's interest in getting educated went back to his fifth year—the same time he started selling peanuts, if the tales are true—a time of expanding horizons. Lillian's brother, Tom Gordy, a world-traveling Navy man, was Jimmy's "distant hero," who became a lightweight boxing champion; Uncle Tom sent Jimmy postcards and pictures, and through some mix of perceptions stimulated the boy to decide he wanted to go to the Naval Academy at Annapolis. His father, Earl, agreed. He had served in the Army in World War I; the academies gave a free education; none of Earl's family had even graduated from high school. Jimmy wrote off for the catalog, pored over its every paragraph, and pondered whether such sins as "malocclusion of teeth" or "retention of urine" would bar his admission. Earl set quietly to work cultivating the congressman who would make the decision. As the crucial moment approached, Jimmy gorged on bananas to meet the weight and stood on Coca-Cola bottles to fix his flat feet. It was quite an ambition for an Archery boy. The family must have thought he had something special.

In grade school, he had demonstrated strong talent. His mother was forever reading books, and books became his favorite Christmas present. At age four he got from his godmother, who must have had either unusual prescience or an overstocked library, a set of all the works of Guy de Maupassant. Earl's outdoor eyes were not much for reading, though he would leaf through *U.S. News and World Report*, but his lessons in practical technology linked up with Jimmy's school science. In class, Jimmy found he could get through his lessons quickly and read whatever he wanted, tucked behind the textbook. Mostly he wanted cowboy and Indian stories, and was pleased—momentarily—when his teacher prescribed something called *War and Peace*.

That teacher, Miss Julia Coleman, was one of that remarkable breed who sense in the mixed minds of adolescents, for all their surface cynicism and ingratitutde, the excitement of excellence. This bent, little, nearsighted woman served her students a cafeteria of intellectual wonders: great poems and paintings and some approximation of great music in her requirement that each play an instrument, be it only the ukelele. She jostled their minds with a program of contests—debating, essays, recitations, spelling, play-acting, Bible memory, reading contests for gold and silver stars. Jimmy ate it up. As he had tried to beat the farm's champion cotton-picker (he lost), in school he took on the Plains brains and won. He would have been class valedictorian, they say, if he hadn't skipped school to go to the movies. (Teeny Ratliff got it.) But he graduated from high school at 16, spent a year in a nearby junior college and another year at Georgia Tech, and was off to Annapolis in 1943. He was 19, and weighed 121 pounds.

The Academy's academic program—all required courses except the choice of a foreign language (his being Spanish)— stressed engineering: the way things work, a link to Earl's mechanical instruction. The nation was at war. Carter and his classmates expected to graduate to combat assignments. Classes were small and run competitively: the homework impossible to complete, "constant pressure for speed and accuracy," supplemented with endless practical exercises, summer cruises through submarine-endangered waters in creaking ships spareable from war duty. Discipline was harsh and quick and inevitable—"There was no way to escape, not even for the best behaved of midshipmen," Carter recalls. He did well enough, finishing 59th in a class of 820 without excessive grinding. He sought out extra burdens, memorizing

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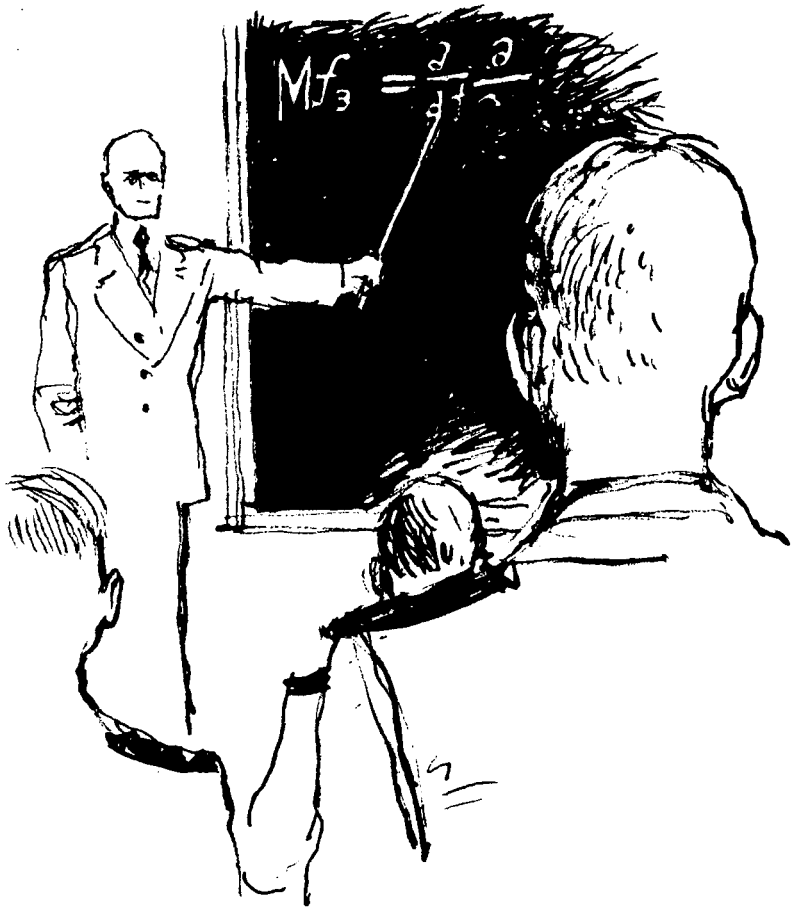

Classes were small and run competitively: the homework impossible to complete.

hundreds of aircraft silhouettes while on guard duty, learning to fly seaplanes, listening with rapt and scientific attention to classical records. It was a busy life, with a significant possibility of death to follow. He recalls it as "a time of challenge, excitement, and learning."

Then during his second summer cruise, in 1945, the whole picture changed. Harry Truman made the Japanese surrender. The war was over; who needed the Navy?

The overriding challenge, the purpose of the enterprise, fell away. Carter graduated with his class and started a two-year hitch of sea duty. He got some technically interesting assignments, some travel, but it was a downbeat time, spent hacking around in leftover ships: "I became most disillusioned with the Navy, and the military in general, and probably would have resigned had not I and all Annapolis graduates been serving 'at the pleasure of the President.' "

Then his own pleasurable anticipations picked up when he heard about submarines—"tough, dangerous, and demanding" duty, sophisticated machinery requiring meticulous attention, the Navy's new thing, run by an alert elite, the commandos of the sea. He applied, got in, trained six months in 1948, and emerged a full-fledged submariner. Down under the water he found challenge aplenty. Men went mad there; Carter saw it happen once. Even without an enemy looking for them, submariners had their own war, a war against the elements, against fear, against mechanical failure. You

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had to keep thinking all the time and an officer had to see to the delicate dovetailing of specialized teams. Carter was often seasick—he would carry his vomit bucket with him to the bridge. One night, surfaced in a roaring Pacific Ocean, a wave swept him off into the cold sea—normally a fatal experience—but by luck another wave dropped him back on the deck, 30 feet aft. His ship's radio transmitter went out and the Navy lost contact. The crew heard a disconcerting message about its ship: "To all ships in the Pacific [in that area]. Be on the lookout for floating debris left by submarine *USS Pomfret*, believed to have been sunk approximately 700 miles south of Midway Island."

The *Pomfret* went to China, saw the Chinese Communists' campfires in the hills above one port. "It was an extremely interesting time," Carter writes. His commanding officer reported him as one "who no matter what he does ends up being the boss."

Carter did so well he was brought back to sea through the launching of the Navy's first new post-war ship, in 1950; but he had already taken his own initiative, applying for and winning an assignment to a program for developing the Navy's first atomic submarines.

Admiral Hyman Rickover became his hero. He was a maverick outsider, an engineering genius shuttled aside by the Navy bureaucracy until he was finally found and empowered by President Harry Truman. It is not hard to tell why, from Carter's own account: ". . . probably the greatest engineer this nation ever produced. . . a great scientist. . . completely dedicated. . .

"He has absoutely no tact—doesn't care for anything. As a matter of fact, all the time I worked for him he never said a decent word to me. However, he did change my life because he had one characteristic, and still has it, which has always been unique. He would never accept mediocrity or low average achievement in relation to anything he did or anyone under him did. I helped him and a few others develop the first two atomic submarines. . . and whenever the Admiral would come around to inspect my work, if I had done a perfect job—which wasn't too often, but every now and then I did—he never said a word, never once did he say, 'good job, Jimmy' or 'well done, Carter.' If he found no fault, he simply looked, turned around, and walked away.

"However, if I made the slightest mistake, in one of the loudest and most obnoxious voices I ever heard, he would turn around and tell the other people in the area what a horrible disgrace I was to the Navy and that I ought to be back in the oldest and slowest and smallest submarine from which I had come.

"[Rickover] demanded from me a standard of performance and a depth of commitment that I had never realized before that I could achieve. And I think second to my own father, Admiral Rickover had more effect on my life than any other man." As a candidate for President in 1976, Jimmy Carter said, "I want to be tested in the most severe way."

Life is a continual knotting and loosening of strands; the total fabric of it, in any period, is a mixed weave. To highlight a certain continuing strand in Carter's development, I have pulled it out of context. That strand—the drive for excellence—comprises, I think, about a third of the Carter worldview and illustrates an important outgrowth of his character.

An Even Better Intimacy

He was not, during this time, cut off from Plains. He wrote home a lot. (To his sister: "Dear Gloria, Please do not call me 'Hot' and please do not write to me on lined notebook paper with pencil.") Earl came up to see him his first Thanksgiving at Annapolis, and Jimmy went home for Christmas. Visiting home again just before his last Annapolis year, he began an even better intimacy: cruising around in a rumble-seated Ford with a friend,

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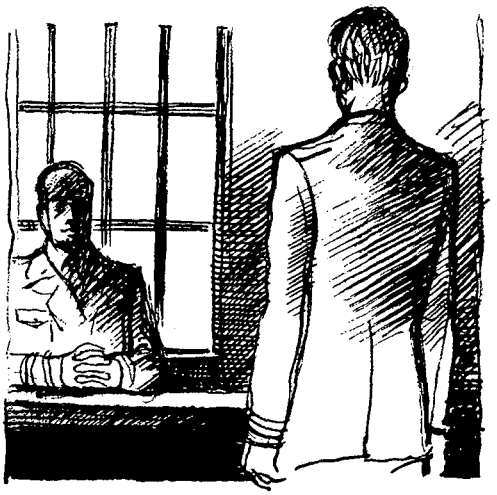
they came upon his sister Ruth and her pretty friend Rosalynn Smith and made a double date for the movies. She held Jimmy at bay for months, but they were married at last in the heat of July 1946.

Rosalynn was a 19-year-old graduate in interior decorating. Her father had died (despite Miss Lillian's nursing) when she was 13, so her mother had to eke out a living as a seamstress. Rosalynn rose to the occasion, as she would right into the White House, packed off to Norfolk, and, during her husband's long absences, managed on $71 per month beyond the rent. At first she looked up to him—"I guess I always idolized him. He was older and so good looking"—but before long she was looking across at him. In 1976, Carter remembered that "I was by far the dominant person in the marriage at the beginning, but not any more. She's just as strong, if not stronger than I am. She's fully equal to me in every way." They named their first son, born in 1947, John William after her grandfather; James Earl followed three years later; then Jeffrey in 1952—all while their father, in his twenties, was sailing all over the place.

Baby Jeff was still Baby Jeff when, in 1953, the Carters quit the Navy and went back to Plains to live. At the peak of his Navy career, thinking he might one day be its topmost officer, enjoying good money and the Rickoverian stimulations, Jimmy chucked it all. His father lay dying, long before his time. Jimmy rushed home on leave; he and Earl had a chance to talk "about old times together" before the end.

Earl's dying revealed what that hard man had done and meant. As he passed, hundreds came to give him words, flowers, favorite foods. Jimmy and Ruth, Daddy's darling, carried the news to the farm's black workers the night he died, and saw, to Jimmy's surprise, their tears spring and flow. It turned out Mr. Earl had been a veritable closet foundation—cash at need, debts forgiven, scholarships, dresses for the little neighbor girls. In contrast, sister Gloria remembered Jimmy musing, "If I died, nobody would really care. Not really care."

When Carter's leave was up, he went back north to Rosalynn and the children. He had "some torturous days" thinking, feeling what to do. He talked it over with a fellow officer, who recalls, "He was really torn by the situation. It was agony. His father was the mainstay of that town—the banker and the landowner. He was a baron in a feudal situation. Jimmy had a strong sense that nobody in his family could hold it all together but him. He felt that if he didn't go back and take the burden, the *town* would



He would never accept mediocrity or low-average achievement.

die." Miss Lillian recalls that "Jimmy didn't want to come back to Plains. He hated to give up his career." Perhaps the center was falling apart: not long thereafter, young Billy joined the Marines (to show, he said, he was a "badass"), and Lillian took a place as a fraternity housemother at Auburn University and started a nursing home in Blakely, Georgia. Most important, Rosalynn most definitely *did not* want to go back to Plains. She and Jimmy wrangled hard over it, "the first really serious argument in our marriage."

The terms of that argument are unrecounted. In the end, though,

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Carter concluded the best thing to do was to go home, and the reason, he wrote as he ran for President, was, "I had only one life to live, and I wanted to live it as a civilian, with a potentially fuller opportunity for varied public service." He called up his mother in the middle of the night and said, "Mother, I have no alternative. I'm going to come home." They made the trip and settled into Plains' public housing project, rent $30 a month. The family business was in trouble: Earl had some $90,000 out in shakily secured loans.

What To Take Seriously

In a sense, intimacy had won out over excellence. Jimmy Carter's need for high achievement, his excitement when exposed to possibilities of excellence was very real and stayed real for him. Yet he never had been an isolated, mechanical man. I think he was figuring out what to take seriously—and how seriously, to discern what his particular life really meant. One might call it an identity crisis, building over the years. He could make a game of life's little harassments, could see how externally determined breaks and blocks made all his choices conditional, but he had also seen what his own initiatives could make of the available materials. When push came to shove, family loyalty won out over personal ambition. He saw it as a broadening, from a restricted striving upward to a wider community life. Rosalynn, perhaps, saw it as a narrowing, from the cosmopolitan to the parochial. Together, though, they chose to meet their responsibilities—his to his homefolks, hers to him.

Earl's secret life, exposed to his son too late for the expression of filial gratitude, shifted the ground of Jimmy's identity, reinforced his sense that one can be hard *and* kind, competent *and* compassionate. Not that the choice to come home was simply a matter of sentiment or philosophy—economic realities were pressing—but his reasoning about it refocused his vision of his world.

Carter had to learn farming over again and catch up with the new methods. Rosalynn's business talent had vast new complexities to deal with. Their first year home saw one of the worst droughts in the history of Georgia. Net income was $254. Then, in long work far easier to write about than to perform, the Carters built a fortune, valued today at about $5 million. Some of Earl's celebrated money-luck came their way, but the prime ingredients were force and determination.

That same first year home brought news from Washington. The Supreme Court said it was against the law to sort children into different public schools according to their race.

Those on the paler side of the spectrum called themselves "whites"; those whose skins were darker—dark at all—were named by the whites, respectfully "Negroes," contemptuously "niggers," but day by day, in Jimmy's world, an easier phrase, "colored people."

Miss Lillian heard the difference the words made. No one would be called "nigger" in her house, and no child of hers was allowed to address an adult black by his or her first name without the respectful preface "aunt" or "uncle." Her professional work went on too busily for her to bother with diagnostically useless distinctions. A black who worked for her said, "Miss Lillian's house was just like a colored person's house, far as colored people. She was about as good a white lady as I've ever seen." Yet she was a "white lady" and her home was not the same.

She did what she could, but in those days it was like swimming against the tide. The front door was a boundary. When black Bishop Johnson's son came home from his college up north, Lillian let him in the front door and served him coffee—which sent Earl out the back door. When the Bishop himself wanted to talk to Earl, he sent his driver around to the back door and Earl met the Bishop in the

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yard.

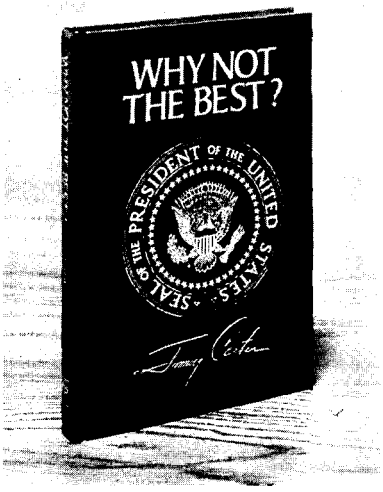
Even out there there were demeaning amenities. The black workers were allowed to join the Carters when they set the radio on the window sill to listen to black Joe Louis box white Max Schmeling. But when Louis smashed Schmeling into unconsciousness in the first round, the blacks went silent, said "Thank you, Mr. Earl," walked across the tracks into one of their houses, closed the door, and *then* broke forth in pandemonious celebration. Jimmy's pal, black A.D. Davis, could, as a child, have the run of the Carter house, but when Lillian took him to the movies with her flock and sat them together downstairs, A.D. watched awhile and then snuck off to the balcony. Later he explained, "I didn't see nobody in there colored but me, and I decided I'd go up there where colored people sit."

Miss Lillian was a lady and thus had leave to expect certain natural courtesies from males. But once in the 1950's Jimmy tried to let a black woman get her wagonload of peanuts ahead of a line of white men—"You fellows don't mind if the lady goes first." They minded: that was no lady, that was a nigger. At least one white customer left in disgust at this affront to common understandings.

Such understandings went way back, had been learned at many a mother's knee. They were not invented, in some burst of evil creativity; they were inherited—that is, each Jimmy and each A.D. found them already there, in all their apparently unalterable commonness. Their force was their conventionality. Thus Earl. "Mr. Earl, he was sort of a hateful man," a black remembers, but adds: "People in those days were *all* kind of mean, and I guess he had to go along with the rest of them." One could go along a long time hardly noticing, certainly not feeling guilty, at least until certain rites of passage called attention to the situation. The train that could be made to stop at Archery

the official autobiography of the President of the United States

Jimmy Carter's
WHY NOT THE BEST?



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had one passenger car, but in Jimmy's first ride he and his black companions had to separate and sit apart. They could stand together, but had to divide to sit down, as he could have noticed the first time he went to the movies or the first time blacks were let into his church for a funeral. The first day of school, the bus came for the white children and left the black children behind to walk to their school nearer-by. A subtler transition came when, somewhere along the way, A.D. was supposed to start calling Jimmy "Mister Jimmy." Lillian's influence can be seen in what happened: A.D. said, "I don't know whether I'm ever going to say 'mister' to you all"; Jimmy said, "I don't blame you. I wouldn't either." They kept their names. But when Jimmy, at school, heard the black accents in his own speech, he worked at talking white and insisted Gloria do the same.

American Dissonance

Gunnar Myrdhal, in *An American Dilemma*, found hope in the fact that racist practice conflicted with the predominant American beliefs, was a "cognitive dissonance," as we would call it now, in which the beliefs might win. But there were so many ways to mute the psychological conflict.

For instance, not noticing. Carter writes, "It seems hard to believe now, but I was actually a member of the county school board for several months before it dawned on me that white children rode buses to their schools and black children still walked to theirs!"

For instance, silence. Home on Navy leave, Jimmy proudly told Earl how his whole crew refused to attend a fancy party because its one black member was disinvited. Earl could not see what there was to be proud of in that. So "he and I agreed to avoid racial subjects on my rare and brief visits home."

And a thousand other ways. The human brain seems to have an enormously rich store of de-dissonancers, including all the ambiguities in the language.

Which makes it all the more impressive—and meaningful for Jimmy's world view—that Miss Lillian kept pushing. Where did Jimmy's "liberalism" on race come from? "Yes, he got that from me," she said, "I've always been like that. My father was never a racist, and I grew up trying to be compassionate and kind to everyone. . . . I've stood alone in Plains, Jimmy and I have stood alone." That is, her son got it from her, and she got it from her father—the handing down of belief is often personal and particular, especially where people grow up closely and visibly interdependent. Perhaps that was a long-range advantage, something his community had over places where life had been more rationally and abstractly divided into distinct components. In 1976, speaking in Boston, Carter said, "When civil rights legislation was passed, I didn't have to walk across the street and say, 'Hi, I'm Jimmy Carter. I've been your neighbor for the last 41 years.' I've known black people and they know me." And if he had trained the blackness out of his accent, he had one mode of it in the rhythm of his speech. One can hear the congregation's interpolated encouragements at each period in his sermon to a black church in Indianapolis: "They care for me and I care for them. We have a lot in common, a belief in one another. We share a common faith in Christ. We speak the same language. We sing the same hymns. We've seen the same poverty and the same disease. We've seen the same struggles in the South and the same growth. We've overcome the same obstacles. It has found us together in the spirit of brotherhood and love."

In the early post-Navy years in Plains, however, he was no questing civil rights revolutionary. Race issues confronted him and he tried to meet them with the integrity appropriate to Lillian Carter's son. He was of his time, but he also knew his place—out front if necessary. Sometimes that

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took stubborn resistance, as when the White Citizens' Council came calling three times to recruit him—first two, then eight or ten, then 30 or 35 neighbors, escalating their threats from displeasure to boycott of the business—and he told them to go hang, becoming the only man in Plains not to join.

Sometimes it took a reactive initiative. He missed a deacons' meeting and discovered later that because of church integration attempts in nearby Americus, they had voted, eleven to zero, with the pastor's backing, to keeps blacks out of the worship services. At the next congregation meeting, Jimmy stood up and reminded them where they were—"This is not my house; this is not your house"—and urged a change of mind. Some 200 were there, and fifty-odd voted. Jimmy garnered six votes: his, Rosalynn's, his son Jack's, his son Chip's, Lillian's, and one other. He got on the school board and worked for fixing up the black schools. At the same time, he went along with white parents who wanted a black school located farther away from *their* school. He backed an integrationist school consolidation plan (his cousin Hugh was on the other side), but made no discernible protest against the extra pay and privileges white teachers got.

He gave up when some white businessmen got a black school bus stop moved to a back street, telling his black housekeeper, "Lexie, there's nothing I can do." When his friend Warren Fortson, the county attorney, was being driven out of town for proposing a biracial committee, Jimmy collected 200 signatures on his behalf. "Jimmy got boycotted again because he spoke up for me," Fortson said. "He sure as hell did. They tried to fry him for it. In my book, that's pure courage." When guns were fired at the home of blacks who worked in a little biracial religious commune, he had only private sympathy: "It's a shame and a disgrace on Sumter County that something like this is going on. I wish there were some way it could be stopped."

But generally, in those days, Jimmy Carter did not hide his beliefs, did wish there could be some way to stop the injustices, did speak out courageously when hard decisions split the neighborhood. Afraid he may have been, but he did not hesitate to stand against nearly everyone—friends, relations, customers, neighbors, deacons—if that had to be. But if he stood, he did not lead. He was not a

"I've stood alone in Plains, Jimmy and I have stood alone."

"civil rights activist." Later, when possibilities of power came his way, he showed more clearly what he would do to get it and what he would do with it in hand. What was significant in those years between childhood and politics was the package of politically relevant beliefs he was putting together—his gathering worldview. He was an active person, but also an attentive one, maintaining "a posture of learning" through these experiences, absorbing relevant images and

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drawing conclusions important for his life.

How did history work? He could see that his history had worked when he reached out for high opportunity. People like Rickover made their marks on the world by holding in mind impossible superlatives, demanding of themselves and others nothing but the best. The demands were never met, never could be—in a sense were not meant to be met. Rather they were counsels of perfection that could lend daily life a certain gallantry, could make meaningful—and enjoyable—the chosen routines. History was neither fixed nor randomly fluctuating. The rhythm of life's seasons could break in unpredictable ways. One could not foresee when a war would end, a wave wash you overboard, a father die, a drought come. But the mule could be guided: leaders who had the imagination to discipline themselves might beat the odds of historical chance and personal stagnation. Perfection was to be held in *mind* (in one's being); in the realm of action (becoming), where results counted, one always had to settle for less. "In politics," quoth Aristotle, "we must be satisfied with a tincture of excellence."

Carter's knack and training in engineering also affected his mind. William Greider of the *Washington Post* perceived that "He has the faith of a technocrat, believing in the mechanics of objects and situations, confident he can figure out how they work." This was more than just the experience, more common in the nineteenth century than in our own wordy age, of pleasure in mastering nature or unpuzzling a recalcitrant machine. Carter came to share with the Founding Fathers, I think, a sense of a real world usefully discernible through metaphors of mechanism—a sort of hydraulic worldview. A stalled submarine engine could be fixed because it was a machine: its parts made up an ordered whole, designed for motion. To fix it you had to get out the blueprint and understand it. That sense would carry over—in Carter's penchant for political blueprints, long-range strategy memos, big pictures. In his list of self-identifications, he included "planner."

Along the way he was picking up impressions of people. There were at least three varieties. "The People" was a romance, an idealized appreciation of the heroism of the everyday life. His interpretation of Tolstoy was that leaders come and go, but "common, ordinary people" make history—"Their hopes and dreams, their doubts and fears, their courage and tenacity, their quiet commitments determine the destiny of the world." Then there were his people, his folks, some so close they seemed a part of his self, some a little farther out but still within the circle of intimacy and all-forgiving loyalty. His mind could widen that circle, probably did when he, having left Archery, came home to Plains. And last there were people he knew, friends like Bob Dylan and his Annapolis roommate, acquaintances, neighbors, co-workers—merging out into a real-world counterpart of The People, a corrective, in part, to the sentimentality of the ideal. But it is interesting that he came to know and like a lot of *different* people—different from him, different from one another. He decided to speak white, but he liked blacks. He would get good grades, but he expressed no contempt for his idle classmates; he helped them with their studies. His racist neighbors were still his neighbors. He was quiet and nearly Puritanical personally, but he liked to get to know other talented types, like Gregg Allman and Hunter Thompson. When Norman Mailer came to Plains, Carter was nice to him.

In all three visions of people, Carter's vision saw them positively, as sources of good motives and morals, if not necessarily wisdom.

What were his visions of the central moral-political conflicts? In his time and place, the issue was race; he was not taken up with such other big issues of the 1950's as witch-hunting for Communists or the war in Korea,

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but he saw—up close—the face of evil behind the bland conventionality of the system. If he had no clear vision of the way things ought to be—no comprehensive social utopia—he could see what was wrong, and he said so. He stood with Lillian and came to believe that Earl would have come around, given time. He has had, from some quarters, an historical bum rap on this point; just *talking* as he did was dangerous and wearying.

But he also saw his neighbor behind the racist's sneer. One had a responsibility to be practical, to work on the specifics without sacrificing all chance of leadership in a quixotic crusade. That was a hard line for a moralist to draw; there were ready excuses for cowardice and indifference lurking there. Carter took it one step at a time.

Political Fortunes

Jimmy and his family went to every kind of political rally—he remembered one where a speechmaking Senate candidate was upstaged by a bread-slicing machine. In 1936, the Carters were so enthralled as they listened to the Republican National Convention on their battery-operated radio that, when the radio went dead, they took it out in the yard and hooked it up to the car battery to hear Alf Landon nominated. In the Navy, Jimmy got to Washington now and then and stopped to visit the Senate chambers and talk with Senator Richard Russell. He followed Rickover's political fortunes. It was all at the edges of his mind, but available for memory when his time came.

When Earl died, they offered Lillian his seat in the state legislature and when she said no, they gave it to a friend of Earl's. It crossed Jimmy's mind to ask for it himself, but he let it pass. He thought about the state senate, but he found out a senate seat was not much of a prize: as in some other states, it was rotated among three counties, for two-year terms, so no one could get much of a handle on the job. Busy as he was farming, Jimmy tried the organizations route instead. He became: president of the state Certified Seed Organization, district governor of the Lions Club, president of the Georgia Planning Association, chairman of the Sumter County school board, and member of the local Library Board and Hospital Authority. His first serious campaign—though not as a candidate—was to get the school merger plan passed. He failed, but got in some practice speechmaking and handshaking.

His first serious campaign—though not as a candidate—was to get the school merger plan passed.

The candidacy bug was nibbling at him. The state was reforming the legislature, putting an end to the rotation system; the new senate seat would represent seven counties. He talked the idea over with a visiting pastor who bunked with the Carters for a week. The pastor was appalled that such a fine young man would consider such a lowdown life: "If you want to be of service to other people, why don't you go into the ministry or

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some other honorable social service work?" Jimmy's thoughts were jelling. He said, "How would you like to be pastor of a church with 80,000 members?"

So in 1962 Jimmy ran for the state senate and won. At some exuberant moment of the campaign, probably responding to a typically ignorant question, he had promised to read every bill. In Atlanta, he ran into 2,500 bills, surely excuse enough for modifying his intentions. Instead, he took a speed-reading course and read them all, which taught him a great deal about the mechanics of government and about the risks of promises. One of his early speeches was against the notorious "30 questions"—clever constitutional questions designed to confound black citizens who wanted to vote. But he also voted for some segregationist amendments to the state constitution. And he had the gall to oppose a constitutional amendment calling for the worship of God, a move which earned for him, in some quarters, a reputation as an atheist.

But his main reputation in the senate was as a hot-shot legislative professional. He got there early and stayed late, five days a week instead of the usual four. He prowled the bureaucratic hallways quizzing startled officials at length about just what they did there. He soaked up facts. Other senators began to turn to him for advice, to accord him a certain authority. After a while, his colleagues voted him one of the five best senators, no doubt a gratifying experience if not quite up to Admiral Rickover's standard. He was put on the appropriations committee, on a special education commission; he served two terms.

As in the histories of other Presidents-to-be, Carter's history showed a pattern: he had emerged from relative obscurity (Plains) to relative prominence (Atlanta). His family helped him, not only by energetic campaigning but also by providing political exemplars and a legitimizing familiarity with political doings. But *he* had taken the initiative—he was not drafted—and he had insisted on seeing the fight through to the end. Once in the senate, he made his own way. He had demonstrated a side of his character that was not clear before: he could be "stubborn as a South Georgia turtle," as an old politician said of him.

Carter had won with a rhetoric of indignation, an appeal to the better and braver civic mind, friends-and-neighbors politicking, and the display of a character bent on excellence (as in the promise to read every bill). Issues, in the sense of concrete, detailed proposals for government action, appear to have played little part. But once in office, he spoke a programmatic language—comprehensive plans for reform in education, taxation, mental health, election law, budgeting. There are no tales of spellbinding speeches, dramatic revelations, high-powered public relations techniques, witty epigrams, or philosophic peregrinations. But the way the people's government cheated the vulnerable made him mad—the madder because he himself had almost been cheated out of legitimate victory—and he said so. He wrote his own material.

He excelled at his political and governmental homework, as he had at Miss Julia's. He proved a quick study, not only learning such facts as happened to come his way, but actively searching out needed information, old and new. In the process, he "became an expert on many unimportant matters," but, in the campaign and the senate, he learned also to get facts for a purpose. There is no evidence that he was overly affected by the social sciences.

Carter's obscurest style element in these early stories is negotiation. In the intervening Plains years, he seems to have been something of a loner (setting aside the family), though he and Rosalynn had a few young married friends. The business was a family affair, though it must have involved business dealings with suppliers and customers. In a campaign crisis, he quickly recruited an effective team. But even in his own account of the

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senate years, there is very little "we," very little sense of the collaborative, and almost no mention of the many names a team-politician would have relished recalling. Indeed there are only two names in Carter's chapter on his senate years, neither a colleague: Horace Tate, executive director of the black teacher's organization, who, the author notes, "became one of my early supporters when I ran for state office," and Reinhold Niebuhr, known to Carter through his books, the man who "observes that the sad duty of politics is to establish justice in a sinful world." He dwells—though without rancor—on the sins of the legislative world, but what is missing is pleasure and practice in the give and take—even the friendship—many a legislator has found rewarding. They admired him as a brain, but one misses any claims of the heart. He made himself a leader, but the ordinary camaraderie, which facilitates corruption and fruitful compromise, was not part of his style.

Running

Still he was riding high again. A fellow legislator said he sought to run for lieutenant governor. Carter grinned and said, "Why *lieutenant* governor?"

Georgia Democrats, meanwhile, had been riding low. 1964 was the year of Lyndon Johnson's landslide, but Barry Goldwater swept Georgia, the first Republican presidential candidate to win there since Reconstruction days. That election, Miss Lillian ran the county Democratic headquarters. Repeatedly, her car was soaped and the aerial knotted. Son Chip, aged fourteen, got beat up at school for wearing a Democratic button. Worse, in the larger scheme, Republican Howard "Bo" Callaway (later Nixon's Secretary of the Army and Ford's campaign manager) carried Carter's home district and became their Congressman. Callaway's ideology had been plastic enough for him to switch parties, and by 1966 he was dangling off the right Republican wing; his bumper sticker said, "I fight poverty—I work." He was very popular, unopposed for his party's nomination.

In 1966 Carter decided to go after Callaway. He announced his candidacy for Congress right after the senate adjourned that spring, and took off campaigning. Suddenly he got a lucky break: the leading Democratic candidate for governor dropped out and Callaway shifted his ambition to the governorship. Carter could sail into the Congressional seat. But here and there, people began that mysterious "mentioning" process that has produced many a candidacy. Who could possibly beat Callaway for

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governor? Maybe Jimmy Carter. And Carter, in classic response, began to think, "why not?" He and his friends studied the statistics and developed the usual bloated estimates of potential money support. Carter gave up safety and reached for danger. There were personal dimensions: Callaway was a West Point graduate, a "wealthy textile heir," leader of the Young Republicans who were arrayed against Carter's Young Democrats, the man who had tried to thwart Carter's crusade to get a four-year college in southwest Georgia. "When we were around each other," Carter remembered, "both of us were somewhat tense."

To take on Callaway, Carter had first to get the Democratic nomination. Lots of candidates besides Carter had heard the call, but the race winnowed down to former Governor Ellis Arnall, a liberal, Lester Maddox, a downspout demagogue ("Treason is the Reason") populist race-baiter, and Jimmy Carter, an unknown—"Jimmy Who?", the newspapers dubbed him. He wore off twenty-two pounds and wore out his vocal cords. One of his orations was: "If I ever let you down in my actions, I want you to let me know about it and I'll correct it. I promise never to betray your confidence in me." All he needed to do was finish second to qualify for the run-off. Near the end, the Carters thought it looked good.

He finished third. Maddox won the run-off. Callaway got the most votes in the general election, but another crazy quirk in the Georgia constitution let the Democratic-controlled legislature pick the governor from the two top vote-getters, and it chose Maddox. With perhaps a little maternal dramatization, Miss Lillian's memory is that her Jimmy "cried like a baby."

But memories vary.

Gloria says he rested a few days, then took his family to the beach and "came home talking about the shrimp boats, went down to the office and started talking about the next campaign"—off and running again. His mentor Charles Kirbo set up a November fund-raising dinner at which Carter was toasted by all factions and, in the glow of appreciation, intimated that "There may yet be another day."

Ruth remembers from that time a broken Jimmy who called her home to share "the personal, big secret" of his despair, and "that moment of sitting out in that woods under the tree when Jimmy's whole life went before him, as he held his face up, the tears were just falling, and he said, 'Ruth, I don't know how I hesitated. I'll give up everything. I would rather have what you have than to even be President of the United States."

"Jimmy did talk to Ruth," Rosalynn remembers, "and she did have an impact on him—but there was none of this going out under the pine trees and having some sort of religious experience."

Jimmy Carter remembers—well, all and none of the above. He did walk in the woods with Ruth and she did ask him if he would be willing to give up politics, but—as he recalls—"I thought for a long time and had to admit that I would not." In *Why Not the Best?* he sails right by—"My church life became far more meaningful to me"—and on into the peanut business. But it was no jolly time: "I was going through a stage in my life then that was a very difficult one. I had run for governor and lost. Everything I did was not gratifying. When I succeeded in something, it was a horrible experience for me."

Such are the exigencies of biography; when life is happening, no one feels any great need to make a narrative of experiences, and when that is later demanded, art shapes memory.

What was to trouble, inspire, and confuse different multitudes in times to come was that Jimmy Carter became a Christian. In 1976, article after article would plumb his soul and many a reporter would have to cram fast on this strange religion, as if it were some ethnological eccentricity brought back from Pago Pago by Margaret Mead. It would scare nervous

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pragmatists, who don't mind Christians as long as they don't really mean it. And it would conjure up burning crosses, rabid literalism, Wilsonian rigidity, Nixon's prayer breakfasts, and many another ghost of "Christians" past.

The Carters had always been Christians in the relaxed sense of the American vocabulary. Each evening, Earl had had the children come down in their pajamas and bend against him to say their prayers. He taxied them to church on Sunday, though as often as not he would leave them there while he strolled downtown for some unsanctified conversation. Miss Lillian attended services, but she was no churchophile: "I'm a Christian, the way I see it. But I do a lot of things the ladies of the church think I shouldn't do.... I think there's a difference between religion and Christianity...I think I'm on the right side of God. I think He likes what I do."

In his own religious (in Miss Lillian's sense) life, Jimmy Carter had exceeded the requirements, like a First Class Scout bucking for Eagle. He was baptized at the regular time and taught Sunday school at eighteen. When he got homesick as an Annapolis freshman, he went to the chapel and prayed. He volunteered to teach a Sunday school class of ten-year-old girls (including the admiral's daughter), and he brought some religious arguments to bear in student discussions "about why we are here, who made us, where we should go, what's our purpose." On shipboard, he Sunday-schooled some more and led the submariners in an Easter service.

Back in Plains he took over Earl's place as a deacon, again taught Sunday school, went with the pastor on recruiting visits for the annual, week-long, revival service, and spoke in neighboring communities on such topics as "Christian Witnessing." A friend gave him a copy of *Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics* and they had some talks about it; indeed, the friend remembers it became "a political Bible" for Carter, and that the two of them concluded that "love and kindness meant a great deal in one-to-one relationships but not in dealings with structures and corporate groups." But all that was going through Carter's mind before the fall of 1966: "I never knew anything except going to church. My wife and I were born and raised in innocent times. The normal thing to do was to go to church."

Visits for God

Politics delivers its verdicts harshly. Carter in 1966 could not, like a business executive denied a promotion, keep it in the family, say he had been "reassigned": he had been *defeated* despite all his competence and energy

"In 1967...I formed a very close relationship with God, through Christ."

and elan. Nor, he found, could he fall back at ease among "the normal things." Something was gnawing at him. Sitting in his pew in the Plains Baptist Church, he heard the preacher demand to know, "If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?" The thought crossed his mind, "I could probably talk my way out of it!" and the thought came back when, preparing a speech, he methodically added up all the "visits I had made for God"—an impressive 140. Suddenly he remembered the campaign and the enormous energies he had poured into that—"300,000 visits for myself in three months, and 140 visits for God in fourteen years!" He read some in

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the Bible book of Luke, "to understand more clearly the admonitions about pride and self-satisfaction." He was no Christian; he was "the Pharisee," loudly advertising how wonderful he was.

His reaction was to try hard and do better. "I began to expand my personal service in the church"—making more speeches (to as many as 5,000), traveling to Pennsylvania and Massachusetts for week-long missionary stints. In the midst of his hot campaign for governor in 1970—this time to win *for sure*—he excused himself for a week to work at a mission in an Atlanta slum.

In his campaign for the Presidency, Carter was at first reticent about the faith he had found, and then, as questions kept focusing on it, he tried to explain:

"In 1967... I formed a very close, intimate relationship with God, through Christ, that has given me a great deal of peace.... It was not a profound stroke of miracle. It wasn't a voice of God from heaven. It wasn't anything of that kind. It wasn't mysterious. It might have been the same kind of experience as millions of people have who do become Christians in a deeply personal way.... I don't think God is going to make me President by any means. But whatever I have as a responsibility for the rest of my life, it will be with that intimate personal continuing relationship.

"God created us in his own image, hoping that we'd be perfect, and we turned out to be not perfect but very sinful. And then when Christ was asked what are the two Great Commandments from God which should direct our lives, he said, 'To love God with all your heart and soul and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.' So I try to take that condensation of Christian theology and let it be something through which I search for a meaningful existence. I don't worry about it too much any more."

Still, what was that "something" that kept showing up in the most amazing places? In the end it was not an argument, but a story. And its meaning was in an old song, Jimmy's favorite from childhood on, written the year after his earliest Plains-buried ancestor was born, by an Englishman who had "servant of slaves" carved on his tombstone. Grown up Carter could hear how it had sounded, after the voices found themselves in the first verse: *'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved; How precious did that grace appear, The hour I first believed.* ■

* * *

In the course of his term as President, James David Barber predicts, Jimmy Carter will prove himself an active-positive, a man who directs toward the job a great deal of energy and derives from it a great deal of enjoyment. His religion will be a positive force, helping him retain his humility and remain open to new ideas. He will assiduously do his homework, try to organize facts into long-range goals, and be willing to admit his mistakes.

Barber sees some potential troubles ahead for Carter, too. His eagerness to achieve results may lead him to try cutting corners in difficult times, although not to the point of self-defeat. His expansive rhetoric may occasionally exceed, or even elude, the facts, and thus draw him criticism. His lifelong weakness at negotiation could lead to problems in getting his programs implemented.

But most important to Carter's presidency, Barber thinks, will be the mood of the nation, which at the moment is deeply suspicious of people in power. Changing that mood will be Carter's greatest challenge, and it will take genuine achievement to do so. "The politics of gesture," Barber says, "will not sustain hope long, and political faith is fragile." ■

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Memo of the Month

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20546

AMERICAN REVOLUTION BICENTENNIAL 1776-1976

REPLY TO
ATTN OF

MAR 7 1977

MEMORANDUM

TO: F/Assistant Administrator 3/8
for Public Affairs

FROM: L/Associate Administrator
for External Affairs

SUBJECT: Space Shuttle

It has come to my attention that in some documents the Space Shuttle has been referred to as an "aircraft."

State laws prohibit land overflight of aircraft at supersonic speeds. Since the Shuttle will carry commercial cargo at some time, some persons at GAO believe that we cannot overflight land on entry. This would, of course, mean the Shuttle could not come down on the KSC Shuttle Strip.

Consequently, would you please make sure that our Public Affairs Offices involved refer to it as the "Shuttle" or "spacecraft" and never as "aircraft."

Herbert J. Rowe

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What's Good About the Electoral College

by Paul M. Perkins

It's open season again on the Electoral College. Reformist politicians and editorial writers are dreaming up disastrous election outcomes that never happened and crying for its elimination. But before we rush toward abolishing the College, we should take a closer look at its reliability and at some of its overlooked benefits.

After the two elections of George Washington in 1789 and 1792, the College has never operated as originally intended (the electors were supposed to make their presidential choice independent of the voters); still, it has survived 48 elections and has produced 48 peaceful successions of government, a record that few modern nations can claim. There are good reasons why it has worked so well and why, if its function is kept in existence, it will continue to work.

The Electoral College works because it expresses the will of the people in a way that tends to widen the margin of the winner and thus defuse the disruptive potential of the transition of power.

This widening of the margin of victory happens because of the feature of the College that is most widely criticized: the winner in each state gets all the electoral votes of that state, no matter how small his majority there. Thus in all 38 elections since 1824 the winner has had a higher percentage of the electoral vote than of the popular vote. In 15 of those elections, he has turned a popular plurality of less than 50 per cent into a clear electoral majority. This weighted edge of the College has also turned razor-thin popular majorities into decisive electoral majorities. For 152 years, the Electoral College has kept the presidential election out of the House—fortunately, because a grossly unfair one-state-one-vote system is the rule there.

The presidential elections in the twentieth century clearly show the stabilizing effect of the College. Woodrow Wilson in 1912 and 1916, Harry Truman in 1948, John Kennedy in 1960, and Richard Nixon in 1968 were all elected with a plurality but less than a majority of the popular vote, but all got a decisive majority in the College. In 1960 Kennedy had 49.9 per cent of the popular vote to Nixon's 49.7 per cent; this was translated into 56.4 per cent of electoral vote for Kennedy. In 1968 Nixon's uncertain 43.4 per cent of the popular vote became a solid 55.9 per cent of the electoral vote.

If, by comparison, the electoral vote for each state had been cast in exact proportion to its popular vote, as reformers sometimes suggest, 40 per cent of the elections since 1824 would have been without a majority and gone to the House for resolution.

Paul M. Perkins is a senior judge on the Ohio common-pleas court.

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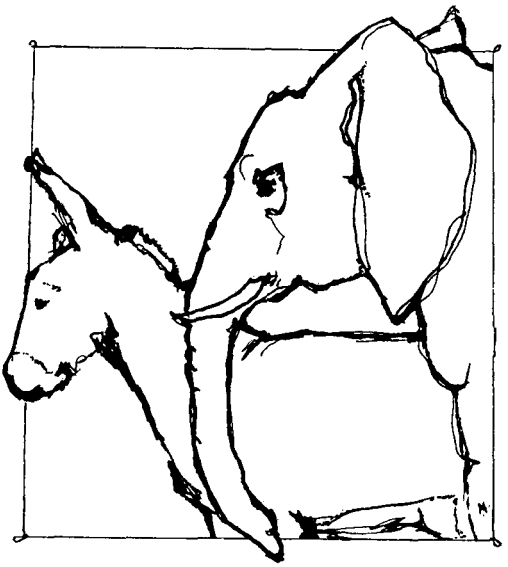
It is staggering to imagine what uncertainties, backroom deals, special-interest pressures, and volatile passions would have actually decided all those elections. The three times Congress had a direct hand in determining the outcome of a presidential election (1800, 1824, and 1876) the result was temporary chaos. Once, under such a system, people realized how often elections could go to Congress, far less power would be vested in the majority and far more in special-interest groups. The likelihood of a clear majority in any election might evaporate, and our presidential selection process might turn into a quadrennial battle between political fragments in the Capitol.

There are analogous problems with the other popular reform proposal, direct popular election of the President. Elections for other offices are direct, of course, and they are often close, and the Republic survives. But the presidency is of such overriding importance that it's worth having a special device for widening the margins in its elections. When other elections are extremely close, they are often followed by months of recounts and protests, and the seating of the person elected is frequently delayed. The best-known recent case is the New Hampshire senatorial election last year, but on lower levels it happens all the time. For most offices, we can endure the controversy; for the presidency, we very likely could not.

This is not to say the Electoral College is perfect; in fact, a couple of changes are in order. The College now reflects the size and state-by-state distribution of Congress as a whole—every state, no matter how small, has two electoral votes corresponding to its two senators, as well as population-based votes corresponding to its membership in the House. Thus the smallest states have disproportionate power. The College ought to reflect only the membership of the House, so it would have 438 electors instead of the present 538.

This would tend to widen the margins of victory even further. The 20 states that have fewer than seven electoral votes in 1976 produced 16 per cent of the total electoral vote; in a system based strictly on population, they would produce only ten per cent. Ford's near-miss last year was the result of the exaggerated weight the College now gives these 20 states. A smaller, population-based Electoral College would have given Carter 57.3 per cent of its vote, instead of the 55.2 per cent that he got.



48 peaceful successions of power

It also seems pointless to keep on the books the completely ignored rule that allows electors to vote as they please, regardless of the popular vote in their states. It is a tribute to the strength of our political parties that so few electors have actually bolted, but if they ever did the results could be disastrous. We're lucky to have an Electoral College filled with the obedient machine politicians the editorialists are always warning us about.

These changes could take place without meddling with the basic function of the Electoral College. We need not, in the name of reform, throw out the baby with the bath. If we do, we'll be abolishing a system that, however strange it may sound, has a great overriding virtue: it works. ■

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Tidbits and Outrages

Share the Wealth

The Senate remains the friend of the little guy. A recent memo to its members recommends that staff salaries be raised on the following basis:

Present Salary:	*Suggested Raise:*
under $20,000	4.83%
at least $20,000 but less than $25,000	6.12%
at least $25,000 but less than $30,000	6.94%
at least $30,000 but less than $36,000	7.92%
at least $36,000 but less than $42,000	9.05%
at least $42,000 but less than $48,000	10.35%
at least $48,000 or more	11.83%

'A' for Effort

The State of West Virginia requires all physicians practicing under a temporary permit to take the Federal Licensing Examination at least once a year. Last December, according to Kay Michael of *The Charleston Gazette*, 143 physicians took the test and only 32 passed. Ah, you say, then the rigorous examination requirement has saved the public from 111 inept doctors? No, the law does not require that physicians *pass* the test, and the 111 doctors who flunked are free to continue to practice.

Style and Substance

The Selective Service System has an annual budget of $6.3 million. Since there is no draft, one wonders where the money goes. Senator William Proxmire has found at least part of the answer: a total of 105 first-class air trips by Selective Service officials in the period ending October 1 of last year. Federal regulations require that ordinarily federal employees are not to use first class. The Federal Home Loan Bank Board did even better than Selective Service, with 287 first-class flights.

Answering the Call

Congressmen always say they ran for office in order to serve the people, but the real reasons are often a far less exalted combination of desperation and career opportunism. In his new book, *Vested Interest*, lobbyist Charles B. Lipsen, who never ran for Congress but once thought about it, gives the most convincing account we've seen lately of the motivations that lie behind a congressional campaign:

"I had no job lined up and couldn't think where to start. I even dallied with the notion of returning to Wisconsin and running for Congress. I still had enough political connections there to mount a reasonably effective—and possibly victorious—primary campaign. But the chances of a Democrat winning the general election were slim, at best. Besides, I would have to go home, open up a law practice and somehow try to earn a living while gearing up for the race two years away. If I lost, which I knew was probable, I was hoping the publicity would at least enhance my law practice."

Rest Easy, the Government Is on the Case

The Tower City, Pennsylvania, mine tragedy reminds us of one of the more enlightened rulings of the Board of Mine Operators Appeals, the final voice of the Secretary of the Interior in mine safety matters. The board refuses to allow federal inspectors to close a mine unless there is a one-in-two chance that miners will die or suffer serious injury. Thus, if a miner has a one-in-three chance of being wounded by a roof fall before the roof can be adequately supported, he will just have to take his chances.

According to two experts in the industry, L. Thomas Galloway and J. Davitt McAteer, mine safety enforcement has also been hampered by the appointment to key positions of people who have long-standing ties to the coal companies. Three assistant administrators of the Mining Enforcement and Safety Administration came from copper- and coal-mining companies. The revolving door principle came into play again in January when one of them left to become vice president of the Pittston Coal Company.

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Disaster

Recently we chided Cato, the author of the *National Review*'s "Letter from Washington," for being wrong on some predictions about the Carter cabinet. Now we would like to congratulate him for the following:

"One of the biggest disasters-that-weren't in American history occurred in December, when the tanker *Argo Merchant* ran aground off Nantucket and began to cough up its cargo of oil. The reactions were neo-Chicken Little. Russell Train, the Environmental Protection Agency director, who, rumor has it, still hopes to click with the Carter people, called it 'the biggest oil-spill disaster on the American coast in our history.' Senator Kennedy, as is his wont, held hearings. The networks covered it around the clock; NBC called it 'an ecological disaster to marine life' and predicted that the black muck would spread across the ocean floor, wiping out such bottom-dwelling species as lobsters, crabs, flounders, and scallops. So convincing were the media predictions of disaster that a group of Cape Cod fishermen sued the owners and the captain of the *Argo Merchant* for $60 million for destroying their livelihood.

"It was perhaps one of the most widely publicized and comprehensively covered disasters in American history. But the problem is that it didn't happen. In fact, today they can't find the oil. It never reached the prime Georges Bank Fishing grounds. It never touched those lobsters and crabs and scallops. In fact, it never hit the bottom at all. As the Coast Guard kept trying to tell anyone who would listen, the *Argo Merchant* carried no. 6 fuel oil, and no. 6 fuel oil is significantly lighter than sea water. There is no way, in other words, that it could blanket the bottom, as NBC confidently told us it would. Eventually, according to the Coast Guard, floating no. 6 fuel oil can coagulate into tar balls that *will* sink to the bottom. But these balls have hard outer surfaces and are inert and non-toxic. . . .

"All in all, then, nothing happened. But neither NBC nor the other networks have yet bothered to tell us that it didn't, and many Americans who watched the coverage and listened to the official reaction no doubt believe it did."

This Month's Good News

If you've given up on making government efficient, let us rekindle your hopes with some news about the District of Columbia's trash collectors. One year ago the trash crews were reduced from four to three men. Productivity, as measured by the tons of trash collected per man-hour, has since increased by 40 per cent.

A Magazine's Best Friend

Is there a tendency toward rising income and declining principles among our liberal intellectuals? We're not sure, but *The New Republic* recently published an advertisement from that great equal opportunity employer, DeBeers Consolidated Mines, Ltd. of South Africa, featuring a diamond clip for only $1,350.

The Peasant Style

We try our best to keep up with the beautiful people so that from time to time we can give our readers a glimpse of the world of glamour. This month we want to pass along a report from Joyce Maynard of *The New York Times* about a luncheon at Elaine's for Arnold Schwarzenegger, who is Mr. Universe and the star of the new film, *Pumping Iron*. Among those attending were Andy Warhol, Jacqueline Onassis, Patricia Lawford, and Mrs. George Plimpton. Ms. Maynard captures the scene:

"Kenneth Jay Lane, a jewelry designer, was talking about a comment he had heard the other day, to the effect that 'reality is just a crutch.' Gael Greene, the New York magazine food writer, was talking about New York magazine. Elaine Kaufman, proprietor of the restaurant, was carrying around a very small, shaggy-haired dog, and a lot of people at the restaurant's tables were looking at people at other tables.

"As for the star of the day, Mr. Schwarzenegger—who is 6 foot 2 inches tall, 210 pounds, with 22-inch biceps and a 31-inch waist—he did not appear particularly hungry. A woman at the table next to his wore an Yves St. Laurent dress—part of the 'peasant' collection that is in style."

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T's & O's

Money Well Spent

HEW publishes something called a Directory of Information Sources. To understand its significance to you as a taxpayer, you need to know that "information source" is a polite term for publicist and that the directory contains 104 names.

Closed-Door Policy

On Wednesday, January 26, Jimmy Carter and Griffin Bell opened the giant steel doors that had closed the Pennsylvania Avenue entrance to the Department of Justice since the Mitchell era. The action was reported as a symbol of the new administration's policy of openness. On Thursday, January 27, our friend Frank Warner went to Justice to do some research in the Antitrust Division library. He reports:

"I walked through those doors and was thrown out. The guard explained that if you're an ordinary citizen not working for the government, you still have to enter the side doors."

The Fat of the Land

Most outsiders think of Washington as a town divided between congressmen, bureaucrats, and lobbyists. But there is another kind of Washingtonian, too, recently described by Richard Cohen in *The Washington Post*:

"Sheila Zubrod is to Washington what maybe a Broadway type is to New York. She knows how to play the town, has no job for longer than a year or more and survives more or less because she long ago recognized that the action in Washington is the federal government and the coin of the realm is something called grants. So Sheila Zubrod does not read the Racing Form. She reads the Federal Register and the Commerce Business Daily. . . .

"It was at the University of Maryland that Zubrod discovered the federal government. She got a job with the Smithsonian as a micropaleontology intern, which meant, more or less, that she spent the morning crushing rocks and then looked at the pieces under a microscope. 'That was under a poverty youth grant,' she said.

"But it was a discovery—the beginning of a pattern. From then on, Zubrod would either work temporarily for a federal agency under some grant program or for a private firm that received a grant. Once she worked for a newsletter that tells others about what grants are available and once she became a consultant to a consulting firm—telling them what to tell the government so they could get a grant.

"After college she worked in Baltimore evaluating a juvenile delinquency program under an LEAA grant. . . . More jobs followed. She helped write a book on services available for the elderly with grant funds and she worked on an environmental impact statement with grant money. She used money from another grant to pre-interview speakers for a conference and then she wrote a book with another grant called 'Solid Waste Is Energy.'

"Zubrod is starting to look for work again. The agency for which she is the press spokeswoman is slated to go out of business this year. She is confident she will find something. She always does.

"At the moment, she's with the Commission on Federal Paperwork."

Plain Speaking

Here is the first paragraph of a press release recently distributed in Washington on behalf of Collegiate Research Systems, an organization suspected by some churlish souls of selling term papers to college students:

"According to the president of Collegiate Research Systems, John Magee, 'Students, especially today, are required to disseminate an abundance of literature in a short period of time. In order to alleviate the student of the mechanical and taxing process of securing available research, Collegiate Research Systems can provide a research document that effectively deals with a student's particular area of interest and that can be utilized as an appropriate piece of co-lateral material in the student's development and construction of comprehension and a point of view.' "

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The Secret Way Liberals Raise Taxes

by Michael Nelson and Donald Sweeney

When Senators Ted Kennedy, Edmund Muskie, William Proxmire, Abraham Ribicoff, and Jacob Javits line up on a roll call against the likes of Strom Thurmond, John Tower, Harry Byrd, and Robert Dole, you generally don't need to see the color of their hats to figure out who the good guys are. And when the issue is tax reform, you can usually write the script yourself.

Now that race has gotten to be too hot a topic to handle in most parts of the country, tax reform has taken its place at the top of the political charts. And why not? It represents the highest ideals of modern liberal thought: equity (every individual and corporate citizen should bear his fair share of the load) and social justice ("We're going to take the money from the 'haves' and give it to the 'have-nots' that need it so much," as Lyndon Johnson put it).

It's also an emotional issue, especially for Democrats. "Loopholes" and "fat cats" are the kind of enemies that can get black and white working-class Democrats to stop fighting each other long enough to fight together. Even George McGovern, who didn't score very often in 1972, seldom missed when he reminded blue-collar crowds that "you pay for every martini lunch that a businessman deducts—while you eat a baloney sandwich." And in the best remembered line of his acceptance speech, Jimmy Carter told the Democratic convention that our tax system is "a *dis*grace to the human race."

There is, however, one inequity that reformers are strangely, even furtively silent about. Unlike most defects in the tax structure, it directly hits everybody that pays taxes. It undermines our progressive tax system at its very core, not at the edges as most loopholes do. It has no special interests defending it, which must make it the only outrage of its kind.

Yet efforts to eliminate this injustice send liberals running for cover. And when Kennedy, Proxmire, Muskie, and Co. lined up on August 3, 1976 against the Neanderthals, it was the Neanderthals who were wearing the white hats.

The issue was taxflation (also known as "bracket creep"), and it was brought before the Senate in an amendment to the Tax Reform Act of 1976 by Senator Robert Taft, Jr.

Taxflation is what happens when inflation blind-sides a progressive tax structure, pushing people into higher and higher tax brackets while their spending power stays the same or even declines.

Take a family of four with an annual income of $20,000. Right now

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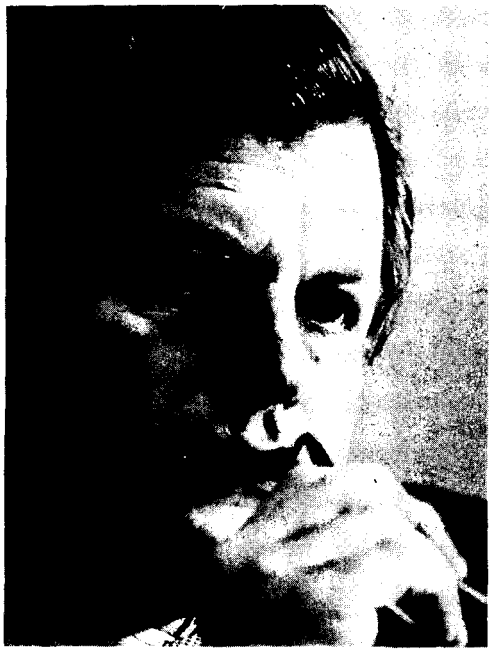
that family is paying around 15 per cent in federal income taxes. But if inflation causes prices to rise at, say, seven per cent a year in the coming decade, that family will have to take in some $40,000 in 1987 just to keep up with the cost of living. Not only will it not be any better off in terms of what its $40,000 will buy, it will be considerably worse off when it comes time to pay its taxes. For without having added one dollar to its spending power, the family will have moved up into a tax bracket that will effectively assess it 25 per cent of its income, close to double the rate (and more than triple the dollar amount) it is paying now.

Poor working people are hit even harder because they depend so much on fixed-dollar exemptions and deductions. A family that makes $5,000 this year actually *gets* $400 in "earned income credit" from IRS; in ten years it will be paying around ten per cent, even if its income barely keeps up with the rising cost of living.

Why is this so? Because the tax brackets and all the basic deductions—the personal exemption, standard deduction, and low income allowance—are expressed in the law by simple dollar amounts. Consequently, they are totally insensitive to inflation. Nobody meant for this to happen; it's just that in 1964, when the tax brackets were set, inflation wasn't much of a problem and nobody thought to adjust for it. But in the years since, inflation has become a grim fact of economic life, and people whose actual purchasing power is standing still—or even declining—are finding that they are drifting nonetheless into successively higher brackets. Taxflation now costs taxpayers $5 billion a year.

Several western nations have taken care of this quirk in the tax system in straightforward fashion. They have simply indexed their tax assessments to weed out the effects of inflation. In an indexed system, individual tax brackets, credits, and deductions are adjusted to take account of changes in the cost of living. In the United States, this would mean that our $20,000-a-year family would continue paying around 15 per cent as long as its real income stayed the same, the poor family would get its credit, and so on.

Canada, for example, has found from experience that not only is indexing progressive in the sense that lower-income taxpayers have realized the largest benefits, but it also maintains the tax system's stabilizing influence on the national economy. Nor is



Senator Ted Kennedy

indexing a foreign concept in the United States—$5 of every $8 the federal government pays people is adjusted according to the inflation rate in one way or another, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

Most important, of course, indexing would be the equitable and just (that is, liberal) thing to do. And it could be done easily: Taft's proposal would have simply tied the dollar amounts specified in the tax code—for the personal exemption, standard deduction, low income allowance, and

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the brackets themselves—to the government's consumer price index.

But when the amendment came to the floor, liberal senators took a walk, leaving only Russell Long to fight for it. By no stretch of the imagination was the Senator, who fancies himself a populist, in high spirits that day. As chairman of the Finance Committee and chief overseer of our tax policy, he had to be there. But he didn't have to like it when a series of conservative Republicans stood up to tell him the error of his ways.

Senator Robert Dole

Taft himself donned hardhat to denounce the "crazy system" that from 1972 to 1974 had "added $408 to a typical construction worker's tax bill" and driven steelworkers' taxes up three times faster than their real incomes.

James Buckley piously proclaimed that though "we have heard much talk about 'obscene' and 'windfall' profits in recent years, the fact of the matter is that the U.S. government has been raking in windfall profits. . . [from] a cruel, hidden, deceitful tax. Taxation by inflation is tyranny."

And as if that weren't enough, Robert Dole, Pete Domenici, and William Roth all expressed their own unsurpassed concern for the "elderly and poor," the "worker," and the "low- and middle-income taxpayer."

To be sure, the Republicans' piety on this issue was more than a little sanctimonious. A perfect opportunity to twit the liberals had come along, and the mere fact that a Republican administration had just presided over the worst period of inflation in memory was not about to stop them from trying to take advantage of it. If indexing would temporarily cost the Treasury some revenue, all the better—it might slow down the growth of social welfare spending. Whatever their motives, however, the conservatives had logic on their side.

Long, after a couple of feeble attempts at opposing indexing, got weary; he just gave up and told the truth. Not the whole truth, of course, but a better part of it than usually finds its way to the Senate floor.

The real problem with ending taxflation, Long conceded, is that sooner or later Congress would have to make up the difference by openly voting for higher taxes:

"It is difficult—goodness knows, we have learned in writing this tax bill how difficult it is—to get senators to vote for tax increases. I have proposed all sorts of tax increases and voted for tax increases that we cannot persuade a majority of senators to vote for. Even when we call it reform we cannot get them to vote for it. . . . Many times, when we ask people to vote for a tax increase, they will not vote for it, for very understandable reasons. Inflation is one thing that does tend, somewhat automatically, to help bring the budget into balance." Better to slip the money out of the rabble's pockets when they're asleep, in other words, than run the risk of rousing them.

We realized just how remarkable a public statement Long's was when a high committee staff aide, unaware of

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his boss's speech, told us the same thing almost word for word, but only after swearing us into his confidence and beginning, "No senator would ever admit this, but. . . ." And in case anybody is still wondering, those "very understandable reasons," described in David Mayhew's *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, are these: Senators like being senators—when they can't be President, at least—and harbor the suspicion that they won't be senators for long if they openly raise taxes.

There are corollaries to Mayhew's theorem too. As much as congressmen hate to raise taxes, that's how much they love to cut them. Ending taxflation by indexing would be a one-shot deal—compare the electoral dividends with those derived from the five piecemeal tax cuts in the past 15 years, and the one that is on the way.

Moreover, just as legislators love to cut taxes, so do liberals hate to cut spending. In that same 15-year period, the federal budget has doubled, redoubled, and is not far away from doubling again—without a single permanent tax boost voted into law.

And so, when Long finally moved to table Taft's amendment, 67 of his colleagues, including all 38 northern Democrats, scurried into the chamber to vote with him. Needless to say, they more than outnumbered the small band of Republicans and southern Democrats who voted against tabling.

We were left, after all this, with the feeling that perhaps the problem was not Congress but rather our own hopeless political naivete. There is such a thing as being too idealistic, isn't there? Aren't ad hoc tax cuts really almost as good as indexing? Don't they do the job and make everybody happy to boot? Hasn't the Republic survived this sort of nonsense from its elected leaders before, and won't it continue to endure similar antics again?

The answer to the first two questions is easy: No. Piecemeal tax cuts tend to come too late in the game, after bad times have already done their worst. Ford's 1975 rebate and Jimmy Carter's proposed $50-a-head plan should have come earlier—and would have if taxes were indexed. Such cuts are also eaten up very quickly by inflation. Thus the other half of the Carter tax-cut plan—the boost in the standard deduction—will have eroded by the time he reaches the end of his second term.

The answer to the third question, however, is that we just don't know.

Senator Strom Thurmond

The Republic won't collapse from taxflation, of course, but then taxflation isn't the worst of the problems we have been discussing. The most disturbing aspect of the liberals' behavior on this issue—and about "pragmatic" liberalism generally—is the extraordinarily illiberal sentiment that underlies it. It was best expressed in this fevered declamation by a staff assistant to an ADA-certified senator:

"Look," he said, "you study politics; you know as well as I do that people are selfish, right? They want us

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[the government] to give them this, this, this, and this, tuck them in at night, burp them—and then they holler about how their taxes are too high and we're all a bunch of crooks.

"But—fortunately, I guess—people also tend to be stupid. These senators know that; hell, they didn't get this far in politics by overestimating the intelligence of the American voter.

"So with this taxflation, as you call it, judging from the mail we get, hardly anybody even knows it exists. Even the ones that use the tax tables

Senator Abraham Ribicoff

in the long form, they probably wouldn't realize it. Which to my mind is fine.

"Now I'll grant you this is an issue that's just waiting for some demagogue to pick it up and run with it. But in the meantime we need the revenue, and practically speaking, there's no other way to get it. So the attitude is: let's leave well enough alone."

It was an oddly persuasive speech—leave us alone, in other words, and we'll do it with mirrors. Unfortunately it is, like so many realpolitik arguments, only valid in the short run. If elected officials act on the assumption—right or wrong—that people are unredeemably selfish and stupid in the present, then nothing could be more certain than that people *will* be that way in the future. "Voters are no fools," wrote political scientist V.O. Key, but in the end "the voice of the people is but an echo" of what their leaders tell them.

What "pragmatic" liberals are telling us now is that geometrically increasing federal budgets and annual tax "cuts" go hand in hand; that there is in fact a free lunch, even as taxflation picks our pockets to pay for it. Like Max Beloff's British, Americans are being taught to disbelieve "the simple notion that when they talk about the state benefiting them they really mean the state taking their money and spending it for them." Inevitably, this kind of irresponsible attitude will bring on its own day of reckoning.

And while conservatives have been the champions of indexing so far, they have probably used it to grandstand as much as anything. Neither party's platform last year pledged specific reform, and former President Ford ignored the issue until January, when he cavalierly included it in his lame-duck tax-cut proposal.

That puts the ball in Jimmy Carter's court. If, as he told reporters en route to the Inauguration, his chance for presidential greatness rests with his faith in a "decent and competent" people, then Carter must teach his fellow Democrats that realpolitik and liberal optimism are not so different after all. Should he and Congress keep their promise of a just and equitable tax system, liberals will probably find their constituents a lot more willing to listen when they are told that you only get what you pay your fair share for. As Harry Truman put it, "If you just give people a chance to be decent, they will be." If you don't, we'll all be living in Great Britain. ■

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WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE CIVIL SERVICE

Inflated Grades

by Marjorie Boyd

Anti-bureaucratic sentiment may be abroad in the land, but so is the desire for the government's services; so big government is usually blamed on the constant creation of new programs designed to help the general populace. Politicians often present government growth as an insoluble, illusory dilemma: the federal government has actually grown very little in the past ten years, they say, and what growth has taken place has only been in response to the public demand for new programs and services.

But the federal budget has grown in the last decade from $170 billion to $400 billion, twice as fast as the cost of living, at the same time that many huge programs have been cut back or ended. And if the public desire for services can't be lessened, there are obviously other things that can. One major culprit in the growth of the federal budget that has nothing to do with the desires of the American people is the civil service system. Everybody knows that the civil service was originally set up to get the hacks out of government, which it has done. But because it has become so enormous, complex, and shrouded in confusing language it hasn't gotten much attention.

Behind its aura of virtue, however, lurks the most wasteful organization in America. The civil service is at the very heart of government growth.

Between 1955 and 1965 the civil service white-collar work force grew from about 1 million to about 1.8 million. Since then it has stayed relatively stable in size; the growth has been in its cost. The line of a graph charting the rise in payroll costs for all federal workers looks like the trajectory of a rocket launch. The increases have raised the average government salary to $12,521, while the average salary in private industry is only $10,522. Of course, there are still government workers who are not paid as well as their counterparts in private industry—Cabinet officers, top management, and research scientists—but these are few in number, and they are all on the highest rungs of govern-

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ment. Paying these people handsomely is at least a reasonable position, assuming that they do have very special skills and abilities. What isn't reasonable is paying the hundreds of thousands immediately below the top well over what they would get outside of the federal government.

The rise in government salaries is the product of a system that is ongoing, so it can be expected that the gap will widen in the future. To understand that system, it is necessary to understand how the civil service works.

White-collar government workers are classified in 18 civil service grades, and grade is the sole determinant of salary. Grades 1 through 4 are generally clerical and low-level technical workers. Grades 5 through 12 are called "administrative" and cover a wide range of workers described as "the college graduate type," though a college degree is not required. Grade 5 is where young administrative workers usually enter the government, but some start out higher. Grades 13 through 15 are called "supervisory," and grades 16 through 18 "management." The bulk of the civil service is in the lower and middle grades; of the 1,349,104 graded federal civil service employees, only 4,605 are in the top three grades and only 363 are grade 18s.

Within each grade there are ten "longevity levels," each at a progressively higher salary. For instance, a grade 10 at the lowest longevity level is paid $15,524, while a grade 10 at the highest level makes $20,177. These longevity salary increases are granted at one- to three-year intervals according to a set formula. While poor job performance could theoretically cause a worker to be denied his longevity increase, I could find no one in the government who had heard of such a case. "All you have to do is breathe," said one official.

It stands to reason that an administrative employee entering the government at grade 5 would move up the grades one by one, but that isn't the way it works. Grades 6, 8, and 10 are reserved for "special employees," such as administrative secretaries, bookkeepers, and technical designers; so all administrative employees go from grade 5 to grade 7 to grade 9 to grade 11 before their grade-by-grade ascent begins. The average time it takes to rise from grade 5 to grade 11 is nine years, but ten per cent do it in as little as three years. The lowest level for a grade 5 is $9,303, and the lowest salary for a grade 11 is $17,056. Holders of master's degrees enter government at grade 7 ($11,523) and lawyers enter at grade 9 ($14,097), so their ascent is even more rapid.

Until 1962 most civil servants were underpaid because they had to depend on the caprice of Congress for pay increases. But that year the entire system of government salaries was overhauled, and ever since, according to the Brookings Institution, federal pay has been riding faster than pay in private industry.

The post-1962 system is called "comparability," and it is based on an idea that, on paper, seems scrupulously fair to both taxpayers and government workers. The system starts in the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which each year makes an extensive survey of salaries in private industry. Taking descriptions of government jobs provided by the Civil Service Commission, the Bureau of Labor Statistics identifies "comparable" jobs in a range of industries spread over a wide geographic area and arrives at an average figure for each job. The Civil Service Commission then fits the jobs into the grade system and sets up a new pay scale by grades. The process is repeated each year and a new salary scale is constructed and presented to the President. If he does nothing, the raises go into effect every October. If the President feels the increases are too high, he can make another proposal that goes into effect unless it is vetoed by a majority of one of the houses of Congress.

Something happens in the trans-

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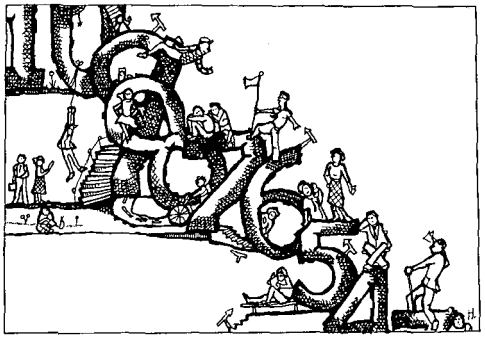
lation of this system from paper into practice that results in an average government salary about 20 per cent above private industry's average. It's a problem of definitions. While the Civil Service Commission prints stacks of books purported to contain exact descriptions of the jobs in each grade level, those descriptions are sufficiently vague and elastic as to cover, if the need arises, almost any human activity. Take accounting, a profession whose work should be easy to classify and quantify. It ought to be possible to state clearly the activities of a grade 12 auditor, but here's how the Civil Service Commission does it: "Characteristic of this level are assignments that require the ability to develop audit plans and analyze policies,



The average time it takes to rise from grade 5 to grade 11 is nine years.

functions, procedures, internal controls, and accounting systems of complex activities primarily in terms of evaluating the future impact of current practices and proposed actions." That kind of gobbledygook is used to describe each grade level, and is complemented by a sprinkling of sentences here and there pointing out that "the work of a grade 12 is more complex than the work of a grade 11." All judgments are relative.

Mike Causey, *The Washington Post*'s civil service columnist, says, "There's no such thing as a typing pool in the federal government any more. It's been replaced by a 'word processing unit.' If you're a supervisor, you don't mind giving a GS-3 or GS-4 to a typist, but you feel rotten giving it to a word processing specialist."

In the personnel office of each government agency is a job classifier who is responsible for the grade classification of jobs. A classifier is an administrative employee, typically a grade 11. Some classifiers are responsible for as many as 4,000 low-level jobs; a few classifiers oversee unusually technical or varied jobs and may cover as few as 500; but the average is around 1,000. The Civil Service Commission provides the classifiers with voluminous written "standards" and offers counsel as well as conducting periodic reviews of the classifiers' work.

Because the only way to get a substantially higher salary is to get a different job with a higher grade classification, government offices are in a constant state of reorganization and realignment. New sections and new jobs are perpetually springing up. While bureaucrats contend, even to each other (perhaps especially to each other), that these ever-changing arrangements enable them to perform their tasks more efficiently, the reorganizations also have the effect of rapidly raising salaries. If a supervisor works up an idea for a new, improved section, it usually entails creating several up-graded positions. The new job descriptions are sent to the agency classifier for approval. Some agencies have permissive classifiers who approve supervisors' plans without checking further; others conduct "desk audits," visiting the reorganizing offices and questioning both supervisors and employees. In agencies that have strict classifiers, a newly up-graded employee is coached extensively in preparation for the classifier's visit.

Even More Enticing

Since the comparability system went into effect, the salaries of the higher grades (except the management grades) have risen much faster than the salaries of the lower grades be-

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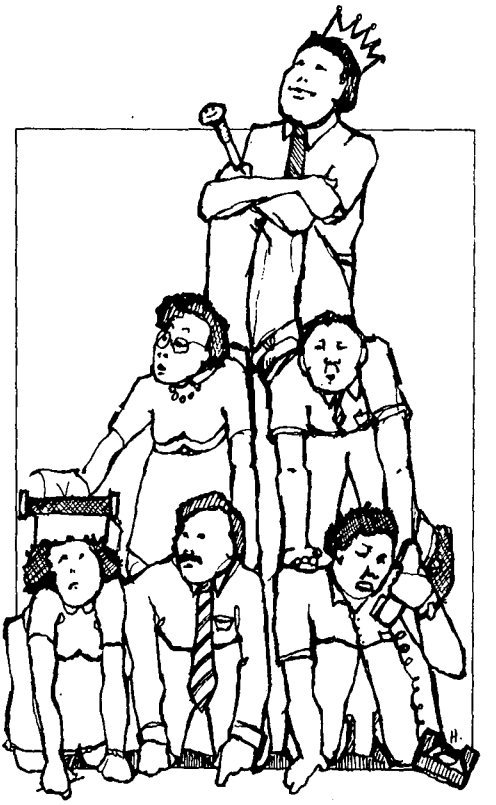
cause salaries for "comparable" jobs in private industry have been rising faster. This has made the prospect of moving up the grade ladder even more enticing.

Thus over the years the distribution of federal workers in the grades has changed drastically. While the number of workers in the top three "management" grades has remained about the same and the number in the lower grades has either grown slightly or declined slightly, grades 12, 13, 14, and 15 have all undergone enormous booms. There are now 300,000 workers in these four civil service grades—that's more than the total population of Birmingham, Alabama or Tucson, Arizona—all of whom make between $20,442 and $43,923 a year. Grade 13, which had only 65,000 workers in 1965, now has 105,000—a 62-percent increase.

The increase in grade 13s has affected not just government's cost, but its size as well. Because grade 13 is the first "supervisory" grade, the civil service regulations make it clear that, except in rare cases, a grade 13 must supervise other workers—and the more he supervises, the better for the job description. After an ambitious grade 12 convinces his supervisor that his particular project is important enough to merit a new section and that he should be promoted to grade 13 so he can head it, he goes out and gathers a group of grade 9s, 10s, and 11s to be promoted for assignment to the new section. Then new offices, clerical employees, equipment, and furniture must be requisitioned. As soon as the new section is in operation, everyone moves up the scale to fill the jobs vacated by its employees, so more grade 5s and 7s must be recruited from the outside.

Now our new grade 13 section chief must be constantly on the lookout for ways to bring more employees under his wing in order to position himself to make his ascent to grade 14. It would be hard to imagine a system that more effectively encouraged people's natural inclination toward empire building. Every person in the civil service system has a powerful financial interest in seeing the government get bigger.

Of course, in the struggle over bodies to supervise there are always losers, and some are shoved aside to work on nonexistent "special projects" alone—but the keep supervisor's salary as a badge of former glories. Nobody in the government ever gets a pay cut.



Encourages people's natural inclination toward empire building.

When Rep. Paul Simon was interviewed recently about the bureaucracy on CBS's "Sixty Minutes," he mentioned in passing that he had heard of a postal official who made $29,000 a year but did not work. Simon hastened to add that he was sure this was a rare situation indeed. After the program, to Simon's surprise, he received several phone calls and letters from highly paid bureau-

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crats who insisted that they too did no work. One official of the Postal Department called to say he was being paid $38,000 a year for doing nothing. Another government worker wrote:

"You are wrong when you say that the unoccupied $29,000-a-year bureaucrat is a rarity. . . . I have had no meaningful work to do since June 1965 and my present annual salary is $29,168. I share an office with another employee who is in the same salary and non-work category."

The cases of government workers who *actually* do nothing—who do crossword puzzles every morning and go to the track every afternoon—are, of course, extremely rare. What isn't rare at all, however, are the people who spend all day either in meetings and conferences or writing memos and conducting briefings about what went on in the meetings and conferences. Effectively, they do nothing, but for eight hours a day they at least maintain the appearance of activity.

A Different World

Although bureaucrats insist it isn't so, the world of government agencies is vastly different from the outside world. The idea of comparability, so reasonable on paper, not only is distorted in practice; it may also be intrinsically wrong in principle. Is it possible to compare a job in private industry, where performance is judged by widely recognized standards, with one in government where standards are fuzzy and unclear? Can you compare anything with a system in which people make $30,000 a year for jobs like Suggestions Award Administrator or Fringe Benefit Specialist of Manager of Creative Services? Is the comparison valid between a government worker whose job is totally protected and a worker in private industry who, despite his best efforts, may have his livelihood snatched away by such vagaries as the whims of consumers?

The government employee takes no risks. He faces no competition, unless he chooses to take part in in-fighting. And even if he loses out in office intrigue, his salary is not threatened and he cannot be fired. (One example: a man named Norval Perkins, as executive secretary of the District of Columbia Board of Elections and Ethics, presided over several spectacular election foul-ups, most notably a primary in which the ballots weren't counted for 12 days. His job was reorganized out of existence; he appealed to the Civil Service Commission, and got his job back and $15,000 in back pay.)

To the outsider, the process by which government employees are promoted seems incredibly casual, despite the Civil Service Commission's stacks of printed procedures, standards, and regulations. No private industry would allow promotion to a $30,000-a-year job to be proposed at the middle-management level and then approved only by the department classifier, a $19,000-a-year administrative employee. The civil service is a system promoting random growth that may or may not fit in with the overall plans of management.

And it is an ingrown system without checks from the outside. From the Bureau of Labor Statistics auditors to the Civil Service Commission reviewers to the agency classifiers to the supervisors, everyone who determines salaries and promotions is an employee of government. Employees of the Office of Management and Budget and the General Accounting Office, the two efficient, no-nonsense government agencies, have put out studies and issued memos complaining that government jobs are over-graded, but since they are government employees themselves, their motivation to push for reform is not strong. While the integrity of the very best of government employees is of the highest caliber, many of their judgments are subjective—and in matters pertaining to one's own financial well-being, bias can often be so deeply ingrained as to be unconscious. ■

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WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE CIVIL SERVICE

Inflated Job Descriptions

by Leonard Reed

He was new in government, this Young Executive, and they didn't do here like they did in Georgia. So, when the woman who sat outside his cubbyhole, occasionally pecking at the typewriter, said she wanted a promotion from Grade 4 to Grade 5, he asked a more seasoned colleague how to go about it.

"No problem," said his colleague. "Just write a new job description for her."

"Job description?" Young Executive looked blank.

"You don't know what a job description is?" the colleague asked incredulously. "Listen, friend, you had better go see Murgentroyd."

* * *

"Let's see, now," said Murgentroyd. "What does this young lady do?"

"Well, suh," said Young Executive, "If I were putting a help wanted ad in the paper, I'd say, 'Typist. 50 wpm.' That's what it comes down to in fundamentals."

Leonard Reed is a writer who after graduate studies in public administration worked in the civil and foreign services for 24 years.

A cloud darkened Murgentroyd's face.

"Look," he said. "I'm a busy man. I have no time for fundamentals. Nobody gets a grade raise by typing. Now, on the other hand, if she were to 'establish work-flow priorities' . . . ,"

"Well, I don't know. I think all she does is. . . ."

"Now, see here," Murgentroyd interrupted impatiently. "Does she have to make judgments, like, say, whether to start typing before or after she puts paper in the machine?"

"Well, I suppose. . . ." said Young Executive slowly, as he noted on his pad: "Establishes workflow priorities."

"What happens," Murgentroyd demanded, "when she runs out of paper?"

"I guess she runs down to Supplies and gets some more. . . ."

"You mean," Murgentroyd asked, "that she is 'responsible for the logistical support of the entire section'? and how about Xeroxing?"

"Nope, never got the hang of it—she gives it to the Xerox maintenance man."

"Good, good," said Murgentroyd, rubbing his hands. "She 'prepares requisitions and specifications for

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duplicating work and forwards same to Departmental Reproduction Branch.' Then they tell her when it's ready and she picks it up?"

Young Executive nodded.

" 'Maintains liaison on work in progress and negotiates with personnel of Reproduction Branch on production schedule.' "

"I'm beginning to get it," Young Executive said excitedly. "If I wanted to say that she yanks correspondence from the file, I'd say. . . ."

"Exactly," said Murgentroyd approvingly. "You'd say she 'performs research with respect to substantive matters under consideration by her supervisor.' And, surely, she must go for the paychecks and collect money for the coffee pot?"

"Don't tell me, don't tell me," Young Executive almost shouted. "She 'performs a variety of administrative duties which entail fiscal responsibilities.' "

A little while later, Murgentroyd nodded slowly at the departing back of Young Executive. "I do believe that he's going to make it," he murmured.

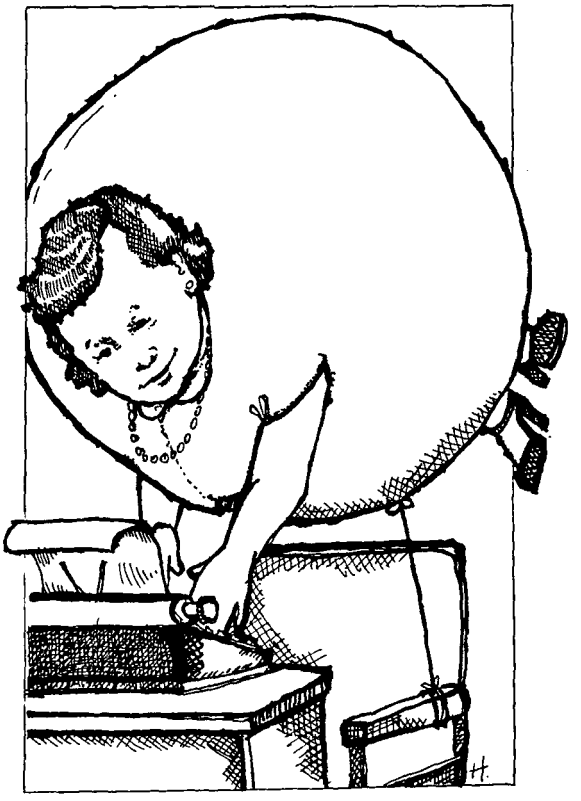
* * *

Who, you ask, is Murgentroyd?

Murgentroyd is a man of many parts—and one part of him is in every government agency and bureau, if not on every corridor and every floor. Murgentroyd is the man who knows how to write a job description that will get a sure-fire raise. When everyone else's imagination has failed to come up with the phrases that will turn a file clerk into the bulwark of the Republic, the call goes out for "Murky" or "Creep" Murgentroyd. The latter nickname was bestowed not in disrespect but in recognition of his finest achievement: grade creep.

Grade creep is the phenomenon by which the average of all grades in any government agency gets higher with each succeeding year. The largest part of grade creep is achieved by civil servants who get their subordinates raises by overstating their duties and responsibilities. A report by the General Accounting Office indicates that as many as 40 per cent of federal jobs are overclassified, some by as much as two or three grade levels. Murgentroyd is the Johnny Appleseed of grade creep.

Long, long ago, Murgentroyd made the discovery that launched his career and made him one of the great behind-the-scenes powers in the federal bureaucracy. Federal agencies, he observed, had a static quality brought



'performs research with respect to substantive matters under consideration by her supervisor.'

about because so few people, once ensconced in a government job, ever leave. This meant that aside from whatever new jobs might be created by periodic "reorganizations" (a device hit upon by a pre-historic precursor of Murgentroyd), the only way for a civil servant to get a promotion was to wait for his supervisor to retire or be trampled to death in the 5 p.m. rush for the exits.

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"That's practically un-American," muttered Murgentroyd to himself. "There's got to be a way. . . ."

He was sitting in bed, preparatory to going to work and, as he peered into the recesses of his navel, a phrase kept running through his head, teasingly: "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet. . . . A rose by. . . ."

"Wrong!" he suddenly yelled, causing Mrs. M. to jump out of bed in alarm. "I've got it! A rose by another name would smell *sweeter*!"

At that moment was born Murgentroyd's masterpiece, the Inflated Job Description. It's unfortunate that no historian was on hand to record the moment, for with that flash of insight, Murgentroyd was about to ignite one of the social revolutions of our time—the elimination of menial work. Gradually, secretaries were to disappear and reemerge metamorphosized in "administrative assistants." The lowly job of "elevator man" gave way to the more dignified profession of "Vertical Vehicle Controller." (To be sure, the nobler titles that were being born had to be supported by appropriate terminology in the job description. It was noted, for example, that the Vertical Vehicle Controller in the South Wing of the State Department Building "expedites and facilitates the convocation of international experts dealing with a wide range of matters of extreme urgency and delicacy.")

Upgrading the entire salary structure of the United States government was a Herculean task, even for a Murgentroyd. But if, in his search for new titles, Murgentroyd's imagination occasionally flagged, his vision of Nirvana renewed him. He invented the "Special Assistant," and in one stroke found a title commanding respect and a grade increase for 133,241 civil servants whose functions no one had been able to fathom. Quickly, executives discovered that having a gaggle of special assistants added greatly to the ambience of their office. Special assistants became more in demand than wall-to-wall carpeting.

The Murgentroyd era marked the end of the federal bureaucracy as a static behemoth. Ever after, it was to be a model of American dynamism. The scientific basis of the phenomenon that developed was Murgentroyd's Law, which states that lateral energy (i.e., the service government agencies are supposed to perform) can be converted into vertical energy (i.e., upward mobility for the staff). Supervisors unselfishly used the Inflated Job Description to upgrade their subordinates, and if, as a result, their own jobs had to be upgraded to maintain a proper level above their minions, well, such is fate.

Of course, the Inflated Job Description had to be used with intelligence and sophistication. This painful discovery was made when an executive named Bubblekopf wrote a job description that attributed to a subordinate the functions *he* was supposed to perform, leaving Bubblekopf with no discernible role in life. Poor Bubblekopf, therefore, had to be made a Special Projects Officer (another Murgentroydian coup) and was never again heard of. Since that time, care has always been taken to qualify a subordinate's functions by adding the phrase, "under the direct supervision of [me]."

And so the grade structure took off like a mean (if somewhat dislocated) St. Bernard chasing a Sherpa up Mt. Everest. There came to be few Indians but many, many Chiefs. Still, Murgentroyd did not rest, but invented the M.Q.A., or Murgentroyd's Quadrennial Adjustment. Each four years, a commission of leading citizens comes together to ponder the words that describe the labors of the Chiefs. And each four years, the commission says that for such work, those inside the government are ill-rewarded compared with the heathens outside, and that many additional dollars must be directed their way.

And, with his elbow, Murgentroyd nudged his wife and said, "Look what I begat!" ■

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WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE CIVIL SERVICE

Inflated Pay

by Stephen J. Chapman

As if February's substantial pay raises for top-level government officials weren't enough—as, in the officials' eyes, they apparently weren't—a good many civil servants are getting another good-sized raise in October, supposedly to bring them up to the levels of pay for "comparable" jobs in the private sector. The February raise snuck up on us, amid a blizzard of favorable publicity, with no debate and no vote; October's is likely to do the same. But while there's a brief between-raises breathing space, it's worth looking at the world in which the raises are fashioned. It's a world full of arguments and assumptions that defy logic.

For instance, a newcomer to the Washington area is struck by its obvious prosperity: from all indications the city and suburbs are awash in affluence. The signs are numerous and visible everywhere. Metropolitan Washington boasts six Mercedes dealerships (Chicago has only five) and ranks sixth in the country in sales volume, ahead of cities like San Diego, Dallas, and Atlanta. The *Washingtonian*'s monthly restaurant guide lists no fewer than 37 "expensive" and "very expensive" places—restaurants where a couple can expect to spend at least $45 for dinner. According to the National Association of Homebuilders, Washingtonians have bid prices on previously occupied homes higher than anywhere else in the United States; in prices for new homes it ranks fourth. Chic New York and Paris fashion designers have found the Capital a lucrative market for their goods, with stores like Saks Fifth Avenue and Bloomingdale's (which just opened its second Washington branch) doing a brisk trade.

What casual observation suggests, concrete facts confirm: Washington-area residents are the richest in the country. With an average annual household income of $23,602, the Capital makes even fairly affluent cities like New York, Los Angeles, and Houston—none of which has an average household income of as much as $17,000—look like poor relations. As Nicholas Von Hoffman noted in a recent column, only two other metropolitan areas even manage to scale the $20,000 mark.

None of this must have surprised most Americans, who tend to regard Washington as a lavish refuge for scoundrels and parasites. The surprise came when those out in the provinces were told that top government people can barely make ends meet. In the weeks preceding the February raise, the daily press was filled with grim tales of poverty in the government's upper echelons. To those outside Washington, and no doubt to quite a few Washingtonians, the spectacle must have bordered on the comic: well-tailored men and women driving their late-model sedans from luxury homes and country estates to elegant French restaurants and Georgetown

Stephen J. Chapman is a Washington writer.

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cocktail parties to cry on each others' shoulders about their low standard of living.

But in Washington, for the most part, the reaction was one of unqualified sympathy. Typical was an article by Lynn Darling of *The Washington Post*, who depicted in bleak colors the plight of a federal judge, cataloging "the mounting bills, the thousands of dollars in loans he cannot repay, the friends he avoids because he cannot return their dinner invitations." The pathos mounted as Darling revealed that this poor man, subsisting on $42,000 a year, had been backed to the wall—"His wife, he said, has been forced to go to work as a real estate agent to help pay for the college education of three of his children, he has sold a dearly beloved 24-foot inboard motor boat, and given up membership in a country club."

Equally moving is the case of former Deputy Transportation Secretary John Barnum, who left that job when Jimmy Carter took office. Barnum, a Wall Street lawyer, was squeezed hard by the constraints of his $44,600 salary: he had to give up his hobby of collecting modern art and take out a loan to keep his children in their private schools. He dismissed the $12,900 February increase for that position as disgracefully inadequate: "They ought to give a 50-percent increase."

The point of Darling's article was summed up by Barnum: "It's just not possible to attract qualified people now." Darling herself claimed that "federal judges are leaving the bench and the black robe behind in record numbers." The Quadrennial Commission on Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Salaries, set up by Congress to make recommendations on federal pay, declared baldly, "The rate of good people leaving the government in the upper grades has become a flood." A group calling itself the Citizens' Committee for Restoring Public Trust in Government, brandishing an intimidating roster of prominent businessmen, educators, labor leaders, and former government officials, took out full-page ads in the nation's major newspapers to warn ominously of a "Hidden Crisis in the Federal Government"—to wit, the impossibility of finding qualified people to accept the shockingly low pay that goes with government service. The argument was so disarming in its common-sense simplicity ("you get what you pay for") that it united people who would be expected to support a pay raise, like John Gardner, Vernon Jordan, and Douglas Dillon, with such usually tight-fisted conservatives as William F. Buckley, George Schultz, and George F. Will. There was almost no one left to disagree.

Despite the unanimity of opinion, it takes only a closer look to discover that the argument was transparent nonsense. The pay itself is the first clue: before the raise, congressmen got $44,600 a year, federal judges $42,000, and supergrades in the bureaucracy up to $39,600. Those figures compare with the average working American male's yearly income of around $9,000. Arguing that congressmen are underpaid requires some spectacular deductive juggling, since by the Quadrennial Commission's own admission the average member gets a raise of $700 per year upon entering public service. Part of the reasoning behind the argument was that the people affected had gotten only very small raises since 1969, despite a big increase in the cost of living. What they ignored were the pay raises in 1968 and 1969, when congressmen got a raise of 40 per cent, federal judges 33 per cent, and supergrades about 29 per cent.

Not only does the supposed disease look awfully benign, but its symptoms are almost nonexistent. Take the alleged mass exodus from the federal bench: in the last two years, out of almost 500 judges, only five have retired—an annual rate of about one half of one per cent. The "flood" of high-level bureaucrats leaving the government is likewise barely a trickle, with resignations among super-

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grades running between six tenths of one per cent and 1.4 per cent in the last five years, compared to a rate of seven to eight per cent for the civil service as a whole. Most members of Congress who leave public service, as always, do so involuntarily.

Neither is there any problem filling the few vacancies that occur in bureaucracy. The Civil Service Commission reported in December that the number of applicants for jobs outnumbered available positions by 30 to 1. In 1975, according to the Commission, 222,000 people took the Professional and Administrative Career Examination, of whom 112,000 passed. Out of this group, only 11,180 got jobs in the bureaucracy. Competition for civil service jobs has gotten so tough that a career counselor at George Washington University recently said, "A lot of students conclude the situation is too competitive and that they're not interested in government work; they develop a there's-no-sense-in-trying attitude." The few jobs that are available are concentrated in the lower grades, which include clerks and typists. The result of the crowded scramble is that the government can afford to be highly selective about whom it hires: according to the Civil Service Commission, anyone who scores below 95 per cent on the test can pretty well abandon hope of being chosen.

It happens to be true, as noted by the aforementioned Citizens' Committee, that "executives in all branches are taking early retirement in record numbers." The reason, however, has little to do with low pay: much more important is the federal employees' extravagant pension system, which far surpasses anything found in the private sector. A government executive with 30 years of service can retire at age 55 with a full annuity; a 60-year-old supergrade needs only 20 years of service to get a full annuity, and a 62-year-old only five years. Not only that, but these pensions—unlike government salaries—are protected against inflation

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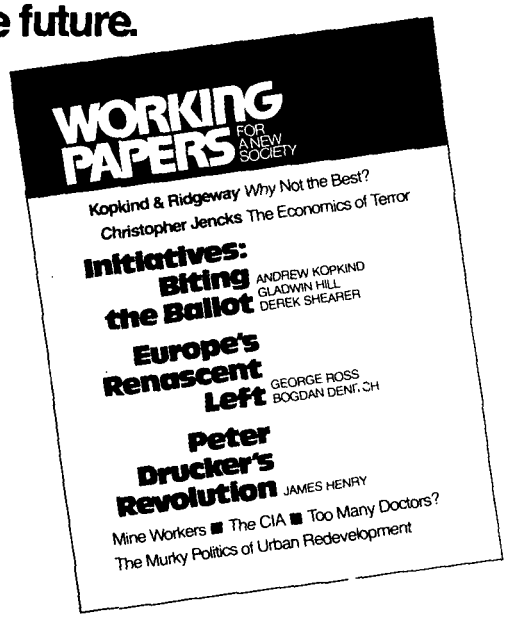

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by automatic twice-a-year cost-of-living raises. The supergrades who recently had their salaries raised to $47,500 can retire at from $26,700 if they're 55 and have 30 years service to $38,000 if they're 65 and have ten more years service. Then the cost-of-living increases begin.

Wrong Assumptions

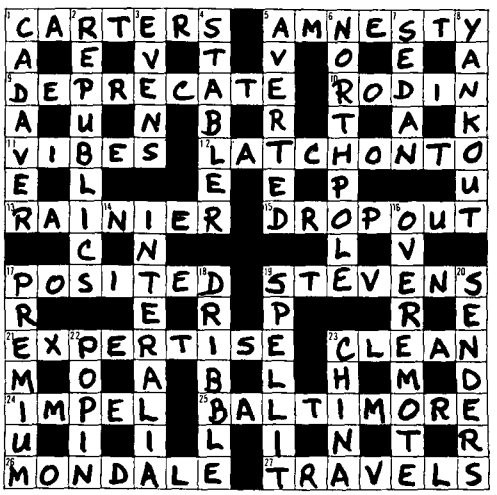
But it's not just the facts of the pay-raise crowd that are in error; their assumptions about what our government should be are all wrong too. The theory behind the pay raise is that we need highly competent, scrupulously honest career professionals at the top levels of the government and that these people need high pay so they'll stay around and won't be tempted into corruption. Now this certainly sounds good—who, after all, isn't for competence and honesty? The trouble is, the present system isn't producing these qualities as well as it could. In Congress, a 150-percent increase in pay over the last 13 years hasn't seemed to have had an appreciable effect on the incorruptibility of the members; in the bureaucracies, there is little corruption but a great deal of incompetence, inefficiency, and behavior with no goal other than self-preservation.

These ills arise in part from a well-paid career government. Having such a government necessarily means that the people in it won't always care deeply about what they're doing, that a high-level lifestyle will be important to them, and that they'll tend not to leave. What we really need is a relatively low-paid, relatively high-turnover government, one that will preclude bureaucratic stultification, guarantee a constant flow of new ideas, and, most important, be filled with people who are there because they really believe in it—the old notion of public serivce. If government service were a financial sacrifice (without requiring vows of poverty, of course), then it would attract idealists who, as their idealism flagged, would leave and be replaced by new blood. The government would be run by people who didn't spend much time worrying about their own affluence or security.

As for temptations toward corruption, they are a product not of absolute levels of income, but expectations. In a low-paid government, no one would expect to stay long and no one would consider a life of luxury part of the deal. As long as congressmen think they're entitled to live like millionaires, the potential for corruption will always be there, no matter how many pay raises they're given.

The best people in government at any time are there primarily because they believe in what they're doing; they didn't take their jobs for the pay, and indeed would probably work for less. If there's any way to encourage the entry of more of these people into the government, and of keeping out the less idealistic, it's by *not* paying them high salaries. That way, when the sense of mission wanes they can leave and be replaced by fresher souls. The official catechism on federal pay is, then, doubly wrong: government ought to pay less than private industry, although it pays more; top-level officials ought to be leaving the government in droves, although they aren't. ■

Answers to the March puzzle:



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political book notes

Public affairs books to be published in April.

America by Design: Science, Technology, and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism. David F. Noble. Knopf, $12.95.

The American Prospect: Insights Into Our Next 100 Years. Henry F. Thoma, ed. Houghton Mifflin, $7.95/$3.95.

Anthony Eden. A. J. P. Taylor, ed. St. Martin's, $8.95.

Boston, The Great Depression and the New Deal. Charles Trout. Oxford, $15.95.

A Capitalist Romance: Singer and the Sewing Machine. Ruth Brandon. Lippincott, $12.95.

A Capitol Crime. Lawrence Meyer. Viking, $7.95. The notion that the reporter story will be to the 1970s what the detective story was to the 1940s is an intriguing one, and it has obviously occurred to *Washington Post* reporter Lawrence Meyer. His first novel is a whodunit about the murder of a Jack Anderson-like figure, starring a canny, cynical reporter for the *Washington Journal*. Unfortunately, Meyer is no Ramond Chandler; his writing and plot are only occasionally as tight as they should be, and his social observations of Washington are absolutely standard fare.

The Challenge of Daycare. Sally Provence, Audrey Naylor, June Patterson. Yale Univ. Press. Three women who helped run a daycare center in the New Haven ghetto have written a long, excruciatingly specific, but very sound account of their experiences and the issues it raised. Their attitude toward daycare is that it's inevitable, so we might as well prepare for it as best we can. But they are commendably aware of the huge traumas for parents and children that it can bring on if not administered very well indeed.

The Church and Third World Revolution. Pierre Bigo. Orbis, $8.95/$4.95.

Class, State, and Crime: On the Theory and Practice of Criminal Justice. Richard Quinney. McKay, $8.95.

Cleared to Land: The FAA Story. Frank Burnham. Aero Publishers, Fallbrook, Calif., $11.95.

Congress–Keystone of the Washington Establishment. Morris P. Fiorina. Yale Univ., $8.50/$2.95. An excerpt appeared in the March issue of *The Washington Monthly*.

The Crisis in Social Security: Prospects and Problems. Michael J. Boskin, ed. Inst. for Contemporary Studies, San Francisco, $5.95.

The Election of 1976: Reports and Interpretations. Gerald M. Pomper, et al. McKay, $8.95/$3.95.

Falling Apart: The Rise and Fall of Urban Civilization. Elaine Morgan. Stein & Day, $10.

The Feminization of American Culture. Ann Douglas. Knopf, $15.

Flight from Inflation: The Monetary Alternative. E. C. Riegel. Heather Foundation, San Pedro, Calif.

The Future That Doesn't Work: Social Democracy's Failures in Britain. R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., ed. Doubleday, $6.95.

Goals for Mankind: A Report to the Club of Rome on the New Horizons of Global Community. Ervin Laszlo, et al. Dutton, $15/$7.95.

The Growth of Crime: The International Experience. Leon Radzinowicz, Joan King. Basic, $11.95.

A Government as Good As Its People. Jimmy Carter. Simon & Schuster, $8.95.

The Hidden Word. R. A. Haldane. St. Martin's, $8.95.

Hugo Black and the Judicial Revolution. Gerald T. Dunne. Simon & Schuster, $12.50.

Inside the Alaska Pipeline. Ed McGrath. Celestial Arts, $4.95.

In the People's Republic. Orville Schell. Random House, $8.95. A look at life in China by a writer who managed, by working both in a factory and in the countryside, to see a good deal more of the nation than is accessible to most Westerners.

International Disaster Relief: Toward a Responsive System. Stephen Green. McGraw-Hill, $7.95/$3.95.

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It Didn't Start with Watergate. Victor Lasky. Dial, $10.

Mr. District Attorney: The Story of Frank Hogan and the Manhattan D.A.'s Office. Barry Cunningham, Mike Pearl. Mason/Charter, $10.95.

Modern Capitalist Planning: The French Model. Stephen S. Cohen. Univ. of California, $3.25.

No Heroes, No Villains: The Story of a Murder Trial. Steven Phillips, Random House, $8.95.

On Trial: Masters of the Courtroom. Norman Sheresky. Viking, $8.95.

Police: Streetcorner Politicians. William Ker Muir, Jr. Univ. of Chicago, $15.

The Politics of Efficiency: Municipal Administration and Reform in America, 1880-1920. Martin J. Schiesl. Univ. of California, $11.75.

The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House. James David Barber. Prentice-Hall, $11.95. An excerpt appears in this issue of *The Washington Monthly*.

Private Property and the Constitution. Bruce A. Ackerman. Yale Univ., $12.95.

Psychology of Women: Behavior in a Biosocial Context. Juanita H. Williams. Norton, $13.50/$8.95.

Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present. Joseph F. Kett. Basic, $16.50. A fascinating study of the changing social roles of youth in America. Adolescence, it turns out, is a fairly recent invention; in an agrarian, unspecialized age, there was no need for a transition period between childhood and adulthood. Kett traces the American teenager's metamorphosis into a troubled, sensitive product of industrial society, and then his more recent attempts to close the gap and begin adulthood earlier. This is a very good book, well conceived, researched, and written—a model of how historians can profit by using the tools of several disciplines. One complaint: for 327 pages, it seems awfully expensive.

Seven Women: Portraits from the American Radical Tradition. Judith Nies. Viking, $8.95.

A Sexual Profile of Men in Power. Sam Janus, Barbara Bess, Carol Saltus. Prentice-Hall, $9.95. This is an alleged scientific study by experts of the sexual psychology of congressmen and the like. But the scientific

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part is only a thin veneer. The meat of the book is a series of interviews with Washington prostitutes who describe in vivid detail their professional lives. Although the point is apparently that men in power have staggeringly deviant notions of what constitutes sexual pleasure, it's mostly just cheap thrills.

Snap Crackle and Popular Taste: The Illusion of Free Choice in America. Jeffrey Schrank. Delacorte/Dell, $7.95/$2.95.

The Socialist Decision. Paul Tillich. Harper & Row, $10.95.

Stonewall: The Inside Story of the Watergate Prosecution. Richard Ben-Veniste, George Frampton. Simon & Schuster, $11.95. The first sentence of this book does not inspire confidence. It reads, "John Dean's call came as Richard Ben-Veniste was hastily recorking a recently opened bottle of Italian Chablis." Fortunately, the authors know more about Watergate than they do about wine. Their book will be valuable to all lawyers who are Watergate buffs. Unfortunately, what's good for them—an exhaustive discussion of the legal issues involved—is deadly for the rest of us.

Taking Rights Seriously. Ronald Dworkin. Harvard Univ., $12.

Talking to Myself: A Memoir of My Times. Studs Terkel. Pantheon, $10.

The Time of Their Dying. Stephen S. Rosenfeld. Norton, $7.95.

Vested Interest. Charles B. Lipsen with Stephen Lesher. Doubleday, $6.95. The autobiography of a veteran labor-union lobbyist, ghostwritten by a *Newsweek* reporter, this is an entertaining, detailed defense of lobbying. Lipsen comes across as a very sane man, and some of his anecdotes are delightful (Lyndon Johnson gets a limousine phone to one-up Everett Dirksen; Dirksen gets a phone of his own; Johnson retaliates by getting a second line), but one is not left convinced of the nobility of the lobbying profession.

The Wall Street Journal Views America Tomorrow. Donald Moffitt, ed. Amacom, $9.95.

We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America. Barbara M. Wertheimer. Pantheon, $15.95/$6.95.

Wife Beating: The Silent Crisis. Roger Langley, Richard C. Levy. Dutton, $8.95.

Women's Health Care: The Hidden Malpractice. Gena Corea. Morrow, $10.

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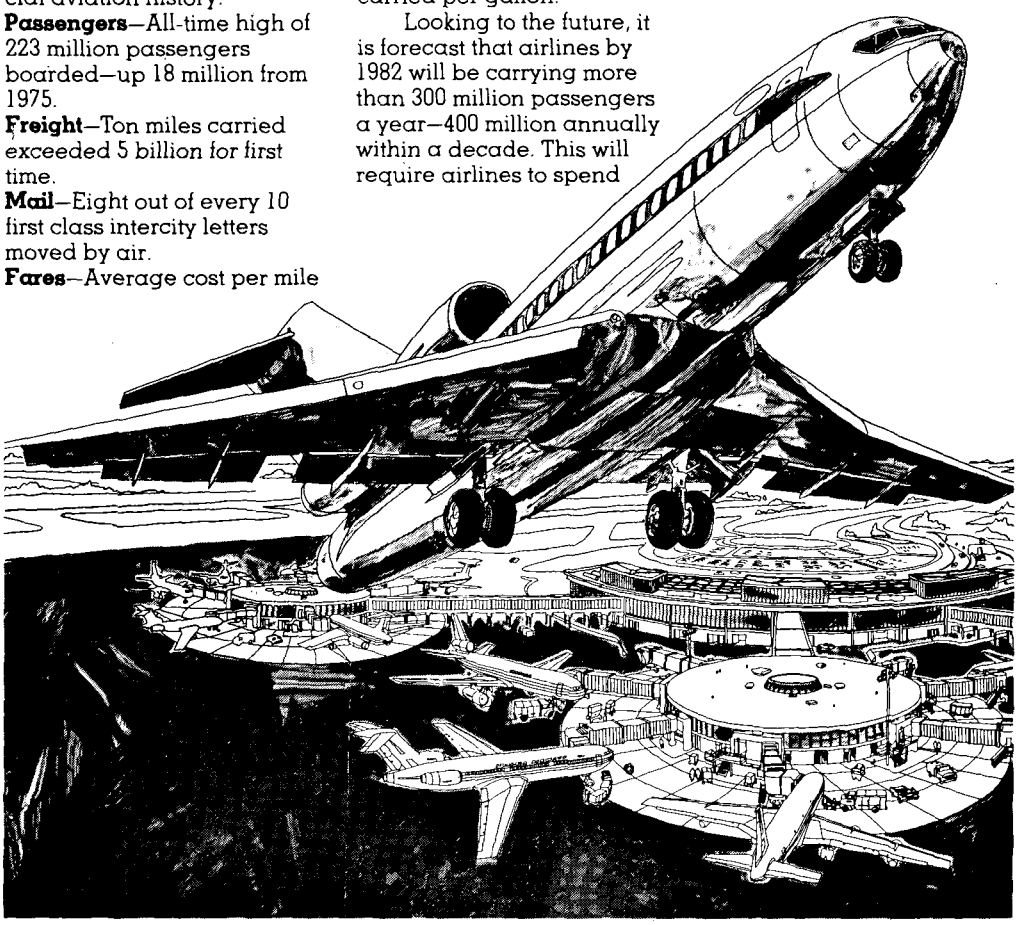

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